



British Birds

October 2012 • Vol.105 • 555–636



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HISTORY MUSEUM
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Rare birds in Great Britain in 2011



British Birds

ISSN 0007-0335

Established 1907, incorporating The Zoologist, established 1843
Published by BB 2000 Limited, trading as 'British Birds'
Registered Office: c/o Chappell Cole & Co, Heritage House, 34 North Cray
Road, Bexley, Kent DA5 3LZ

British Birds is owned and published by BB 2000 Limited, the directors of which are John Eyre (Chairman), Jeremy Greenwood, Mark Holling, Conor Jameson, Ciaran Nelson, Ian Packer, Adrian Pitches and Richard Porter. BB 2000 Limited is wholly owned by The British Birds Charitable Trust (registered charity No. 1089422), whose trustees are Richard Chandler, Jeremy Greenwood, Ian Newton and Peter Oliver. Directors and trustees are volunteers who draw no remuneration.

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Annual subscription rates

Individual subscriptions: UK – £52.00
Overseas (airmail) – £59.00
Libraries and agencies – £97.00

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or the subscriptions office.

Printed by Hastings Printing Company

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Front-cover photograph: Juvenile Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*,
St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011. Gary Thoburn

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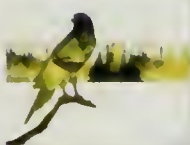
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British Birds aims to: ❖ provide an up-to-date magazine for everyone interested in the birds of the Western Palearctic; ❖ publish a range of material on behaviour, conservation, distribution, ecology, identification, movements, status and taxonomy as well as the latest ornithological news and book reviews; ❖ maintain its position as the journal of record; and ❖ interpret scientific research on birds in an easily accessible way.

Report on rare birds in Great Britain in 2011



Nigel Hudson and the Rarities Committee

This is the 54th annual report of the British Birds Rarities Committee. The year 2011 was an exceptional one for rare birds, perhaps surpassed only by 2008 for the range of taxa recorded. A number of potential 'firsts' from 2011 are still under consideration, including White-winged Scoter *Melanitta deglandi*, Slaty-backed Gull *Larus schistisagus*, Asian Red-rumped Swallow *Cecropis daurica daurica/japonica* and Eastern Black Redstart *Phoenicurus ochruros phoenicuroides* – but even in the absence of these mega rarities the report includes a mouth-watering variety of avian strays from around the globe. The Eastern Black Redstarts are particularly interesting because, in addition to considering the well-watched birds in autumn 2011, we are reviewing a record from Kent in 1981. This reassessment follows the provision of new images, showing details of the wing formula that were not available in the original submission (see *Brit. Birds* 105: plates 262 & 263). The opportunity to assess and publish older records in this report extends to several Black-bellied Dippers *Cinclus c. cinclus* and a Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* on Scilly from 1980, although these start to look positively contemporary when compared to the Dorset Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* sound-recorded in 1961! We have included statistics in square brackets for accepted records of Northern Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos c. caudatus*, Eastern Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans albistriata* and Black-bellied Dipper for previous years, since we recognise that these do not reflect the genuine status of these forms. Current evidence, in terms of the rate of occurrence, suggests that these forms *should* be considered as rarities, and we encourage observers

to submit any well-documented older records for consideration so that their true status can be reflected more clearly. As the previous examples show, even records from more than 50 years ago can prove acceptable if suitable evidence is provided.

The rarest birds featured in this year's report are as follows:

- 2nd Madeiran Petrel *Oceanodroma castro*, Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* and Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*
- 3rd Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica*, Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane*, Rufous-tailed Robin *L. sibilans* and White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*
- 4th Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* and American Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*
- 5th Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla*
- 5th & 6th Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*
- 6th Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* and Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus*
- 6th & 7th Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata*
- 7th Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* and Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*
- 8th Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri*, Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* and Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*
- 10th Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* and Veery *Catharus fuscescens*

A trio of highly prized eastern chats rubbing shoulders with five Nearctic passerines with fewer than ten records to their name illustrates the quality of the autumn arrivals in 2011. Short-toed Eagle, White-throated Robin and Spectacled Warbler

emphasise the quality of overshoots arriving from the south and southeast. Shorebird enthusiasts were not disappointed, with great variety and some exceptionally rare plumages in a British context, the long-staying juvenile Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* and first-winter Western Sandpiper *C. mauri* among the memorable highlights. The former may have been a transatlantic arrival in Britain, perhaps associated with a large arrival of juvenile Long-billed Dowitchers *Limnodromus scolopaceus*. Influxes of Glossy Ibises *Plegadis falcinellus* and Red-flanked Bluetails *Tarsiger cyanurus* have become almost expected, but the unprecedented movement of juvenile Pallid Harriers *Circus macrourus* in the autumn was not anticipated.

The quality of the year 2011 is also reflected in the number of records handled by BBRC – 633, up from 526 in 2010. The overall acceptance rate was 87.8%, compared with 84.4% the previous year.

Taking into account the absence of White-billed Diver *Gavia adamsii* (33 records in 2008) and Cattle Egret *Bubulcus ibis* (168 in 2008), which are no longer considered by BBRC, it becomes clear that there were more individual rarities in 2011 than in any previous year, although the number of taxa involved just failed to reach the number in 2008.

The resolution of some long-standing reviews and difficult records remains an ongoing challenge, notably those involving Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli*,

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* and Royal Tern *Sterna maxima*, and of course the Druridge Bay Slender-billed Curlew *Numenius tenuirostris*. A range of potential Pacific gulls continues to absorb our attention, including records of Slaty-backed Gull and Thayer's Gull *L. (glaucoides) thayeri*. Similarly, a series of Elegant Tern *S. elegans* and 'orange-billed' tern records await further research, as does a first-winter female *Ficedula* flycatcher from Spurn, Yorkshire.

Nonetheless, during the past 12 months we have made progress on a series of difficult files, including a number of records of Ross's Goose *Anser rossii* and Eastern Subalpine Warbler. The progress with the latter is part of a Herculean effort by Brian Small to sift through our archives to try to identify all the potential candidates. We have started by assessing all those that were formally submitted as this form in recent years. So far, we have limited our acceptance criteria to the more easily diagnosable males but it appears that genetic analysis may help with females. The challenge with Ross's Geese has involved trying to make sense of their movements and the number of individuals involved. With the relatively straightforward task of identification resolved, these will now be winging their way to BOURC where the greater challenge of attempting to assess their origins will be considered.

Attentive readers perusing the Not Proven section of the report will note the appearance of the 1986 Fair Isle Saker Falcon *Falco cherrng* (following BOURC's review that considered that a hybrid could not be ruled out; BOURC 40th report) and the 1987 Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe*. The latter record has not been reconsidered since the original assessment, but the decision appears not to have been formally published in a BBRC report.

Acknowledgments

BBRC continues to be supported financially by Carl Zeiss Ltd, and their support for the past 31 years has been invaluable in enabling us to carry out our work. We are also grateful to the continued support of the RSPB.

We wish to thank all the observers and photographers who sent details of their observations to BBRC, either directly or via County Recorders or the BirdGuides and/or Rare Bird Alert online galleries. Once again we wish to express our heartfelt thanks to county

	2011	2010	2009	2008
Acceptances				
– current year	568	467	459	660
Not Proven				
– current year	65	59	62	67
Acceptances				
– previous years	74	56	104	103
Not Proven				
– previous years	24	38	50	40
TOTAL	731	620	675	870
Corrections	4	6	11	22
Number of taxa in accepted records	127	117	113	134

and regional recorders and their records committees for the invaluable work that they undertake in supporting BBRC. Thanks also go to all those individuals who updated information on earlier sightings through correspondence following the posting of work-in-progress files on the BBRC website throughout the year. While they may not be acknowledged in the report, their contribution remains very significant for improving the accuracy of the information provided. BirdGuides has continued to assist the Committee, particularly by enabling the submission of photographs for consideration by BBRC, and we are also grateful to Dominic Mitchell and the staff at *Birdwatch* magazine for assisting the Committee's work. We thank the following in particular for their support in various ways during the year: Steve Arlow, Jez Blackburn, Mark Brazil, Martin Collinson, Mark Constantine, Magnus Robb and the Sound Approach team, Harvey van Diek, Steve Dudley, Chris Gibbins, Rob Gordijn, Andrew Harrop, Leo Heemskerk, Wietze Janse, Justin Jansen, Phil Jones/Rye Bay Ringing Group, Chris Kehoe, Peter Kennerley, Paul Leader, Paul Lehman, John Martin, Dorian Moss, Killian Mullamney, Keith Naylor, Nigel Odin, Richard Porter and

Steven Wytema. John Marchant has continued in his role as Archivist and Brian Small as Museum Consultant. Keith Naylor provided valuable support to the BBRC Secretary and we also thank Ross Ahmed and Andy Musgrove for their significant efforts to support the secretarial workload in recent years. We also thank the *Dutch Birding* team for providing electronic copies of papers from that journal for reference; the BTO for their continued generosity in providing space and facilities for our archive; and all the staff at the NHM, Tring, for their continued support for our work and allowing unlimited access to the specimens in the collection.

Finally, we are extremely grateful to all the observers who have submitted records via the online form on the BBRC website (www.bbrc.org.uk). We believe we have ironed out the inevitable gremlins that appeared with the website redevelopment and we now recommend and encourage all observers to use this system of record submission.

Adam Rowlands

Systematic list of accepted records

The principles and procedures followed in considering records were explained in the 1958 report (*Brit. Birds* 53: 155–158). The following points show the basis on which the list has been compiled:

1. The details included for each record are (1) county; (2) locality; (3) number of birds if more than one, and age and sex if known (in the case of spring and summer records, however, the age is normally given only where the bird concerned was not in adult plumage); (4) dates; (5) if photographed or sound-recorded (and this evidence assessed by the Committee); (6) if trapped or found dead and where specimen is stored, if known; and (7) observer(s), in alphabetical order.
2. In general, this report is confined to records which are regarded as certain, and 'probables' are not included. In cases of the very similar Eastern Bonelli's *Phylloscopus orientalis* and Western Bonelli's Warblers *P. bonelli*, however, we publish indeterminate records, and this also applies to frigatebirds *Fregata*, Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, White-bellied/Black-bellied Storm-petrels *Fregetta grallaria/tropica* and Booted/Sykes's Warblers *Iduna caligata/rama* (see also *Brit. Birds* 94: 395).
3. The sequence of species, English names and scientific nomenclature follow the 'British Birds' List of Birds of the Western Palearctic; see www.britishbirds.co.uk/birding-resources/the-british-birds-list/
4. The three numbers in parentheses after each species name refer specifically to the total number of individuals recorded in Britain (i) to the end of 1949, (ii) for the period since 1950, but excluding (iii) those listed here for the current year. The decision as to how many individuals were involved is often difficult, but a consensus view is represented by 'probably/presumed same' (counted as the same in the totals); records for which it is less certain whether the birds involved were the same or not are counted as different in the totals. An identical approach is applied to records of a particular species recurring at the same, or a nearby, locality after a lapse of time. In considering claims of more than one individual at the same or adjacent localities, the Committee requires firm evidence before more than one is accepted.
5. The breeding and wintering ranges for each species are given in parentheses at the end of each species account.
6. The following abbreviations have been used in the main text of the report: BO = Bird Observatory, CP = Country Park, GP = Gravel-pit, Resr = Reservoir, SF = Sewage-farm.

Lesser White-fronted Goose *Anser erythropus* (9, 116, 0)

Norfolk Buckenham Marshes RSPB, adult, 13th December 2010 to 31st January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 560–561; presumed same 27th December into 2012, photo (B. Jarvis, S. J. White *et al.*).

(Rare & declining throughout entire breeding range from N Scandinavia to NE Siberia. Reintroduction scheme in Swedish Lapland boosts numbers wintering in Netherlands. Migratory, wintering Hungary, Black & Caspian Sea areas, N Kazakhstan & lower Yangtze valley, China.)

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis* (9, 69, 2)

Devon Exminster Marshes RSPB and Topsham, Exe Estuary, first-winter, 5th November into 2012, photo (J. R. Diamond *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Dorset Stanpit Marsh, first-winter, 18th–28th October, photo (E. C. Brett, D. H. Taylor *et al.*); presumed same Ferry Bridge and Abbotsbury, 30th–31st October, photo (B. Spencer per Dorset Recorder); also seen Devon.

Fife Dunshalt, Auchtermuchty, first-winter, 12th–13th February, photo (H. Bell, M. Ware *et al.*).

Hampshire Titchfield Haven area, adult, 20th January to 6th February, photo (M. D. Shaw *et al.*); also seen Sussex.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Martin Mere WWT, Pilling, Marshside RSPB and nearby sites, first-winter, 14th October 2010 to 31st January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 562; also seen Perth & Kinross.

Perth & Kinross Loch Leven, first-winter, 19th March to 28th April, photo (J. S. Nadin, G. Owens *et al.*); also seen Lancashire & N Merseyside.

Sussex Pett Level, adult, 26th December 2010 to 1st January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 562; also seen Hampshire.

2010 Kent Littlestone and Dungeness, 2nd December (A. J. Greenland, D. Walker).

(Breeds Taimyr Peninsula, Siberia. Migrates SW to winter coastal regions of W Black Sea in Romania & N Bulgaria. Small numbers regularly winter Netherlands, Greece & Turkey. Some may still use former wintering areas along Caspian Sea.)

Black Duck *Anas rubripes* (0, 38, 1)

Highland Camuschoirk and Garbh Eilean, Loch Sunart, male, 6th–26th June, photo (D. Sadler *et al.*); presumed same Strontian, Loch Sunart, 6th October, photo (L. Greenstreet, C. E. Wells).

(Breeds E North America from Manitoba to Labrador, Canada, & S to North Carolina, USA. Most are resident or dispersive but N breeders migrate to winter coastal SE USA.)

Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors* (10, 231, 6)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult female, 12th–24th June, photo (S. Davies *et al.*).

Cambridgeshire Ouse Washes RSPB, male, 1st–23rd April, photo (per birding information services).

Carmarthenshire Sandy Water Park, Llanelli, and Penclacwydd WWT, first-summer male, 20th



Wayne Davies

319. First-summer male Blue-winged Teal *Anas discors*, Sandy Water Park, Llanelli, Carmarthenshire, March 2011.

March to 1st May, photo (G. Harper *et al.*) (plate 319).

Cleveland Haverton Hole, adult male, 8th August to 1st October, photo (M. A. Blick *et al.*), presumed same as Cleveland 2009, 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 563.

Dorset Longham Lakes, female, 3rd December into 2012, photo (G. P. Green *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Newford Duck Pond, St Mary's, first-winter, 18th–21st September, photo (D. Houghton, A. Howe *et al.*). Porth Hellick then Lower Moors, St Mary's, female, 27th November into 2012, photo (K. Webb *et al.* per Scilly Recorder).

2010 Cambridgeshire Fen Drayton Lakes and Berry Fen, adult male, 15th June to 14th August, photo (A. Cotton, D. A. Hall, R. D. Thomas *et al.*).

(Breeds from S Alaska, across much of temperate Canada to SC USA. Migratory, wintering S USA, Mexico, Caribbean & N South America.)

Lesser Scaup *Aythya affinis* (0, 158, 5)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult male, 3rd–4th November, photo (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cornwall Dozmary Pool, male, 9th January to 5th March, photo (B. Craven *et al.*), presumed same as Cornwall 2010, see below.

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay and Cosmeston Lakes, adult male, 7th November 2010 to 2nd April, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 564; presumed same 28th December into 2012; also seen Somerset.

Fair Isle Buness, adult female, 7th–9th October, trapped, photo (A. L. Cooper, A. Hitchings, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Slimbridge WWT, first-winter female, 27th December 2010 to 4th March, photo; presumed same, 13th December into 2012; see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 564.

Gower Eglwys Nunydd Resr, Port Talbot, adult female, 16th February to 6th March, photo (M. Hipkin *et al.*), presumed same as Gower 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 564.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Marshside RSPB, first-winter male, 19th March to 22nd April, photo (P. Kinsella *et al.*); presumed same Martin Mere WWT, 29th April to 10th May, photo (per Lancashire & N Merseyside Recorder).

Northumberland Marden Quarry and Tynemouth, female, 5th October into 2012, photo (A. Curry, M. S. Hodgson, C. G. Knox *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Cuckney Dam, first-winter male, 17th May, photo (D. Hursthouse, R. A. Frost *et al.*).

Orkney Loch of Ayre and Holm Sound, Holm, first-winter female, 28th November 2010 to 18th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 564.

Somerset Wimbleball Lake, adult male, 9th–26th December, photo (B. Gibbs *et al.*); also seen East Glamorgan.

2010 Cornwall Dozmary Pool and Colliford Lake, male, 17th January to 22nd March, photo (B. Craven, S. Madge *et al.*).

(Breeds from C Alaska through Canada to Hudson Bay & S to Washington & South Dakota. Isolated populations E of Great Lakes. Winters on coasts of USA, in E from New Jersey to Mexico, West Indies, C America to N Colombia.)

King Eider *Somateria spectabilis* (68, 158, 2)

Moray & Nairn Burghead, adult male, 8th October 2010 to 22nd January, photo (*Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565); presumed same 23rd September into 2012, photo (per Moray & Nairn Recorder).

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, adult male, 30th March to 26th June, photo (C. N. Gibbins *et al.*), presumed same as North-east Scotland 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565.

Shetland West Voe of Sumburgh, Mainland, two: first-winter female, 1st November 2010 to 6th February, photo; first-winter male, 5th December 2010 to 10th February, photo; see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565. North Sandwick and Linga, Yell, first-winter male, 16th February to 10th March, photo, presumed same Skuda Sound, Unst, 22nd–24th March, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Uyeasound and Belmont, Unst, and Linga, Yell, second-winter male, 21st February to 3rd April, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*).

2010 Caithness Dunnet Bay, first-winter male, 27th March, photo; note revised county, previously listed under Highland, *Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565.

2010 Highland Chanonry Point, Fortrose, second-winter male, 22nd January (D. Allen), presumed same as Burghead, Moray & Nairn 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565.

2010 Orkney Bay of Noup, Westray, female, 5th August (A. J. Leitch), presumed same as Westray 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 564–565.

(Breeds Kanin Peninsula E across Arctic Siberia, including Novaya Zemlya & W Svalbard, Arctic Alaska, N Canada & N Greenland. European population winters along ice-free coasts of White Sea, N Norway & Iceland. Pacific population winters Bering Sea.)

Black Scoter *Melanitta americana* (0, 8, 2)

North-east Scotland Murcar and Blackdog, adult male, 27th June to 4th October, photo (N. A. Littlewood *et al.*).

Northumberland Stag Rocks, Bamburgh, adult male, 14th–20th April, photo (G. Bradbury, M. S. Hodgson *et al.*); presumed same Goswick, 11th October to 7th November, photo (R. Ahmed *et al.*).

This remains an extremely rare bird in Britain, so two in one year is exceptional. However, anyone who has witnessed the frustratingly distant spectacle of the 40,000+ Common Scoters *M. nigra* off the coast of North Wales cannot help but wonder just how many Black Scoters are still overlooked, both there and elsewhere. In such large flocks it is just possible to pick out male Surf Scoters *M. perspicillata* (forget females!) and scoters with white wings (and of course the latter might not all be Velvets *M. fusca*). Such viewing conditions make identifying adult male Black Scoters particularly difficult. Some adult male Common Scoters can have extensive yellow and orange on the bill, necessitating good views in profile to distinguish the Black Scoter characteristics.

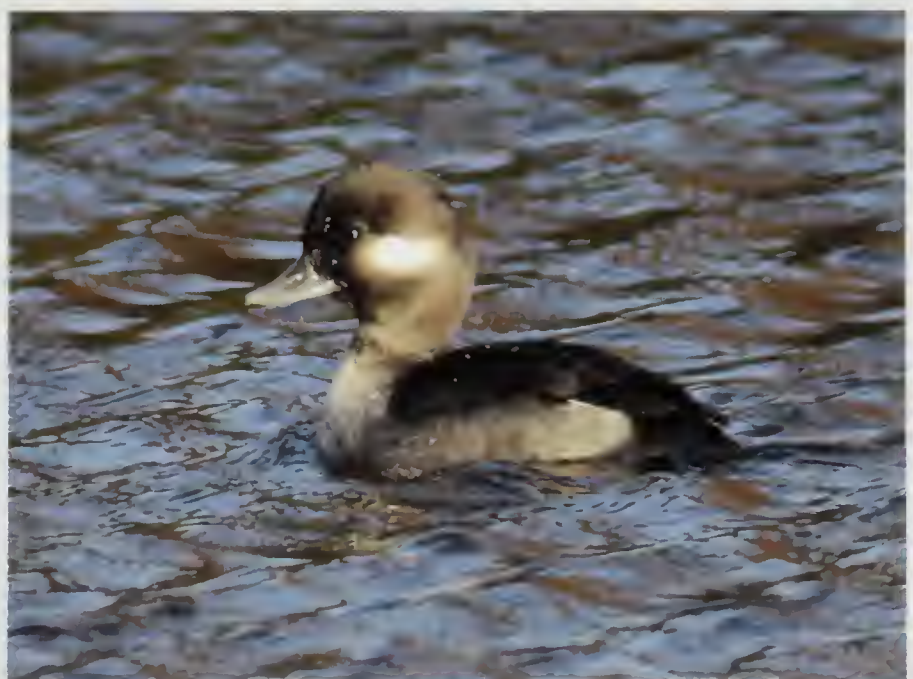
Up to the end of 2011, all European records of Black Scoters have been of adult males. However, a combination of effort and expectation has recently produced vagrant White-winged Scoters *M. deglandi* in western Europe from both Asia (*M. d. stejnegeri*) and North America (*M. d. deglandi*) while, for the first time in the Western Palearctic, an immature male Black Scoter was seen in summer 2012 in North-east Scotland (that bird has yet to be formally assessed, of course). Locating the region's first female-type Black Scoter is perhaps not too far off. In North America, Black Scoters are habitually found in the surf line and occasionally birds in Britain have left the main flock of Commons to feed in the surf – where they are close enough to get to grips with. So the moral of the story is: always check the young 'uns! It's about time one was found, after all they *are* identifiable, in the right conditions.

(Breeds Siberian tundra from Yana River E to Alaska, & N Canada E to Newfoundland. In N Atlantic, winters along coasts of E USA, N to South Carolina, & on Great Lakes. Elsewhere, winters along both coasts of N Pacific Ocean, S to N Japan & California.)

Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola* (1, 13, 1)

Cornwall Housel Bay, Lizard then Loe Pool, juvenile male, 26th October into 2012, photo (G. Jeffery, A. R. Pay *et al.*) (plate 320).

(Forested regions of North America from C Alaska throughout W & C Canada to Hudson Bay, S to Montana & NE California. Winters throughout North America, from Aleutian Islands & coastal Alaska S along both seaboards to N Mexico, with small numbers wintering inland.)



Mike Barker

320. Juvenile male Bufflehead *Bucephala albeola*, Housel Bay, Lizard Cornwall, October 2011.

Black-browed Albatross *Thalassarche melanophris* (1, 26, 0)

2010 Yorkshire Flamborough Head, adult, 26th May (B. Richards).

(Breeds on islands in S South Atlantic & Indian Oceans. Outside breeding season disperses N throughout southern oceans N to Tropic of Capricorn.)

Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeiralfeae* (0, 45, 2)

Norfolk Sheringham, 16th September (J. R. McCallum, P. Morris, K. B. Shepherd *et al.*).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 31st August (A. M. Allport *et al.*).

(Breeding Zino's confined to C mountains of Madeira. Fea's breeds on Bugio, Desertas, & Cape Verde Islands.)

Macaronesian Shearwater *Puffinus baroli* (3, 60, 0)

Devon Lundy, calling male, 21st April to 5th May, sound recording (C. & M. Dee *et al.*), presumed same as Lundy 2010, see below.

2010 Devon Lundy, calling male, 4th–24th June, sound recording (H. Booker, C. Townend *et al.*).

This terrific record, of a male calling from a burrow in a Manx Shearwater *Puffinus puffinus* colony on Lundy over two consecutive breeding seasons, closely mirrors a male on Skomer (Pembrokeshire) in the summers of 1981 and 1982 (James 1986). The Lundy bird was never seen, but still attracted a number of birders to experience an extraordinary event. The discovery of this bird comes at a time when the Manx Shearwater population on the island is increasing, largely as a result of the successful eradication of rats during 2002–04 (Brown *et al.* 2011).

There is a possibility that Macaronesian Shearwaters might occur more frequently than these two records, separated by three decades, suggest. Massive colonies of Manx Shearwaters occur on Skomer and Rum (Argyll), which might be particularly attractive to a vagrant Macaronesian Shearwater, yet the chances of discovery are frustratingly small. Indeed, an out-of-range Macaronesian might be more likely to be found in one of the smaller (yet still large) colonies on islands bordering the Celtic and Irish Seas or along the west coast of Scotland.

Seawatching records remain mired in controversy but colony-based records at least provide further tangible evidence of the occurrence of this enigmatic species. We simply don't know whether seawatching reports represent resightings of colony-based birds on foraging trips, but all seawatch records of Macaronesian Shearwater since 2007 are awaiting assessment as part of a wider BBRC review. This species is seen regularly from ferries in the Bay of Biscay but to date there have been no accepted records from boats in UK waters.

(North Atlantic range restricted to warmer waters of Madeira, Canary Islands, Cape Verde Islands & the Azores. Outside the breeding season found at sea near breeding sites within North Atlantic.)

Madeiran Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma castro* (0, 2, 0)

2007 Cornwall Pendeen Watch, 16th September (M. T. Elliot, J. Foster *et al.*).

This record had been held for assessment while the first (off Scilly, in July 2007 and published in last year's report) was being considered by BBRC and BOURC. The Cornwall bird was found initially by the second of the two observers named above and lingered, feeding offshore, allowing other local observers to get to see it. Although the Scilly record was photographed, the images obtained were not of high quality and the Cornish one was not supported by photographic evidence. While this situation is unsurprising for a storm-petrel, it does mean that this species joins a small group of birds on the British List where definitive photographic evidence of its occurrence in these islands does not exist. The challenges of assessing records such as this have been heightened by another claim of Madeiran Storm-petrel, also from Pendeen, in September 2009. Like the 2007 record, that bird was seen by well-respected and experienced observers, including the two individuals named above. It is considered to be a very strong claim, although it did not linger as long as the 2007 bird, yet the identification was not supported unanimously by all the observers who saw it, which provides a significant obstacle to its acceptance. Yet another claim of this species from Pendeen, in August 2009, was found not proven (*Brit. Birds* 103: 637) but it

should always be remembered that a 'not proven' decision does not mean that the record did not involve the species claimed – just that the Committee considered the evidence insufficient to accept the sighting formally.

It seems likely that this will be the last report to feature 'Madeiran Storm-petrel' as we know it as a species, since the recent proposals to split the various North Atlantic breeding populations into several species seem set to be adopted by BOURC. On present knowledge it is unlikely that it will be possible to attribute any of the current records to a particular taxon, and in that event future reference would be to a group of species, rather similar to the situation surrounding most Zino's/Fea's Petrel *Pterodroma madeira/feae* records in Britain.

(North Atlantic population breeds on islands off coast of Portugal, Azores, Madeira, Canary Islands & Cape Verde group. Elsewhere, breeds Ascension & St Helena, South Atlantic, & Galapagos, Hawaii & islands of N Japan. Distribution outside breeding season poorly understood.)

Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus* (c. 250, 234, 2)

Isles of Scilly Little Arthur Farm, St Martin's, male, 18th May (J. Metcalf).

Norfolk Titchwell Marsh RSPB, juvenile, 8th–12th September, photo (K. Du Rose, K. & M. Pickering *et al.*) (plate 321).

Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, two adults: male in song, 10th May to 11th August (P. Dolton, B. Gibbs *et al.*); female, 30th June (per Somerset Recorder); presumed same as Somerset 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 568–569.

2010 Somerset Ham Wall RSPB, juvenile, 23rd July (P. W. Luxton).

(Widespread but local in Europe N to 53°N. To E, breeds to 60°N in European Russia, & E to Kazakhstan & NW China. Migratory, wintering mainly E Africa, S from Sudan & Ethiopia. Other populations largely resident or dispersive in N Indian subcontinent, sub-Saharan Africa & Australia.)



Kevin Du Rose

321. Juvenile Little Bittern *Ixobrychus minutus*, Titchwell Marsh RSPB, Norfolk, September 2011.

Squacco Heron *Ardeola ralloides* (69, 76, 4)

Derbyshire River Erewash near Attenborough, first-winter, 28th October to 6th November, photo (S. Gauton *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 443); also seen Nottinghamshire.

Dorset Little Sea, Studland Heath, juvenile, 21st September, photo (G. Yeomans).

Kent Dungeness RSPB, adult, 14th–19th June, photo (R. J. Price *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire River Erewash near Attenborough, first-winter, 28th October to 6th November, photo (S. Gauton *et al.*); also seen Derbyshire.

Shetland Urafirth, Mainland, 6th–7th June, photo (D. & J. Coutts, J. Sandison, P. Sinclair *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 225); presumed same Burn of Crooksetter, Mainland, 12th June (per Shetland Recorder).

The history of the Squacco Heron in Britain falls into three broad periods. It is one of the few rarities for which the pre-1950 total almost approaches the number seen since. In the early years of BBRC it was a genuinely rare bird, with just 24 records in 40 years from 1950 to 1989. Since then, in common with many other rare herons, numbers have increased and there have been 56 records in the 22 years from 1990 to 2011.

Post-1950 records show a clear bias towards southwest England (41% of sightings), which suggests a predominantly Iberian origin for British vagrants. The Shetland record is thus particularly noteworthy; indeed, it was the first record for the islands, and only the fifth for Scotland (following sightings in Lothian prior to 1877, Orkney in 1896, the Outer Hebrides in 1913 and Fife in 2005).

Since the Squacco Heron is a trans-Saharan migrant, it is not surprising that all arrival dates of post-1950 birds bar one (20th March 1990, on Scilly) fall between April and October. Most arrivals are in late spring, with 53% having been first seen between 21st May and 20th June. Just ten of the modern records turned up in autumn, so adding two more in a single year is notable. The first, in Dorset, could easily have been missed. Visiting Studland Heath to see Otters *Lutra lutra*, Gwenda Yeomans photographed an unusual heron; she showed the photos to local birder Simon Kidner, who identified the Squacco – but by the time he got there, just three hours later, the bird had already gone. The second autumn bird, which spent several days on the Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire border, was late in the year although three other recent birds have remained into November (two in 2010, in Northumberland and Pembrokeshire, and another in Northumberland in 2004), while one in Norfolk in 2001 remained from September to 10th December.

(Breeds Mediterranean basin from S Spain to Black Sea & E to Kazakhstan, with large population in Danube Delta. Northern populations migratory, wintering N tropical Africa. African population largely resident.)

Black Stork *Ciconia nigra* (22, 177, 13)

Breconshire Twyn-yr-odyn, Brecon, 8th May, photo (J., J., K. & L. Hole).

Derbyshire Beeley Moor, adult, 24th April (A. & N. J. Moulden). Two Dales, 24th June, photo (K. Smith).

Dorset Morden Bog, 29th April (R. Hastings); presumed same Lytchett Bay, 1st May (S. Robson).

East Glamorgan Mynydd Ty-talwyn, Maesteg, adult, 22nd May, photo (J. Slocombe, P. Tabor).

Hampshire Linwood area, New Forest, adult, 10th–11th April, photo (D. & J. Hudson *et al.*), presumed same 15th–22nd April (K. F. Betton, E. & G. Hobby, P. & R. Thomas *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, 2nd April (J. Askins, J. Pearson).

Norfolk Eccles on Sea and Sea Palling, adult, 6th April, photo (T. E. Allwood, A. J. Kane, T. Nicholson). Between Horsey and Waxham, adult, 1st June, photo (M. Saunt).

Northamptonshire River Nene near Weedon, 14th–29th May, photo (M. Russell, F. C. Smith *et al.*) (plate 322).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, adult, 3rd April, photo (J. & R. Cockram *et al.*); presumed same Nettlebridge, 3rd April (J. Hansford).

Suffolk Felixstowe, adult, 7th April (W. J. Brame).

Sussex Beachy Head, juvenile, 6th August, photo (E. Darwent, R. Greaves).



R. W. Bullock

322. Black Stork *Ciconia nigra*, River Nene near Weedon, Northamptonshire, May 2011. The information given about moult in this species in *BWP* is limited, but the text states that the post-juvenile moult is complete; body moult starts in February of the second calendar-year, wing moult follows and lasts until winter. In adults, there is a single complete annual moult, beginning in May–June and lasting until winter. This bird shows adult-like head and body plumage (including coverts and most of the tail) and although it has retained previous-generation outer tail feathers, all the flight feathers (and their associated greater underwing-coverts) except P5–P6 have been replaced. The old feathers appear to be juvenile type, the new ones adult. So, despite the lurid bare parts and adult-like look, according to *BWP* it should be a first-summer. This seems surprising in a bird of this size; the only other explanation is that a second-summer can retain most juvenile flight feathers for nearly two years, bar the odd replacement pair (as sometimes in cranes). It is clearly not an adult, and our gut feeling is that it is a second-summer, but at present there is nothing concrete to back that hunch up and we have left it as age uncertain in the database.

2010 Kent Sevenoaks Wildfowl Reserve, juvenile, 4th August (B. Stoneham).

(Breeds C Iberia & E France through C Europe to Russia & small numbers into N Greece & Turkey. To E, breeds widely in forested temperate regions of Russia & Siberia to Russian Far East. Most are migratory, wintering Africa, S & SE Asia.)

Glossy Ibis *Plegadis falcinellus* (340, 186, 40)

Anglesey Malltraeth Marsh RSPB, 15th–19th November, photo (per Anglesey Recorder).

Berkshire Freeman's Marsh, Hungerford, 9th December 2010 to 9th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 572–573; also seen Kent (*Brit Birds* 104: plate 51). Horton, first-winter, 22nd–25th October, photo (C. D. R. Heard *et al.*).

Buckinghamshire Dorney Lake, adult, 7th–8th May, photo (K. Duncan *et al.*); also seen Essex, Leicestershire & Rutland, Norfolk.

Carmarthenshire Kidwelly area, first-winter, 29th September to 2nd October, photo (G. Harper *et al.*).

Cleveland Cowpen Marsh and Saltholme RSPB, first-winter, 15th–18th October, photo (K. Hutchinson *et al.*).

Cornwall Stithians Resr, first-winter, 4th–18th October, photo (S. Kolodjiejski *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Cumbria Blackdyke, Arnside, first-winter, 15th December, photo (J. Lishman *et al.*); also seen Lancashire & N Merseyside.

- Derbyshire Willington GP, first-winter, 12th November, photo (R. M. R. James, R. Pittam).
- Devon Devil's Point, Plymouth, 6th–17th November (T. Forster *et al.*). Exminster Marshes RSPB, adult, 28th December into 2012, photo (S. Cox *et al.*).
- Dorset Stanpit Marsh, three, 30th September to 17th October, photo (J. Main, P. Morrison *et al.*). Stanpit Marsh, 28th October to 6th December, photo (T. Adamcik *et al.* per Dorset Recorder).
- East Glamorgan Ogmere Estuary, 30th September to 5th October, photo (D. C. Bolt, N. P. Roberts *et al.*).
- Essex Abberton Resr, adult, 2nd May, photo (A. Kettle); also seen Buckinghamshire, Leicestershire & Rutland, Norfolk.
- Gwent Newport Wetlands RSPB, first-winter, 9th October, photo (M. Chown *et al.*).
- Hampshire Titchfield Haven, 21st–23rd October, photo (J. R. D. & K. V. Shillitoe).
- Isle of Wight St Helens and Brading Marsh, seven, 30th September to 7th October, photo (per birding information services).
- Isles of Scilly Tresco Channel then Lower Moors and other sites, St Mary's, 27th December into 2012, photo (J. Higginson *et al.* per Scilly Recorder).
- Kent Dungeness, 10th–21st January, photo (D. Walker *et al.*); also seen Berkshire. Dungeness, 6th October to 7th December, photo (D. Bunney *et al.*). Stodmarsh, two, first-winter, 27th October into 2012, photo (M. Chidwick *et al.*).
- Lancashire & N Merseyside Glasson, Lune Estuary, first-winter, 11th December (B. & S. Wood); presumed same Leighton Moss RSPB and nearby sites, 13th December into 2012, photo (per Lancashire & N Merseyside Recorder); also seen Cumbria.
- Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, adult, 5th May, photo (R. J. Green, S. M. Lister, P. G. Stammers *et al.*); also seen Buckinghamshire, Essex, Norfolk.
- Norfolk Stoke Ferry, adult, 10th May, photo (C. Donner *et al.*); also seen Buckinghamshire, Essex, Leicestershire & Rutland. Waxham Barns, 21st October (M. Haden, P. J. Vines); presumed same Titchwell Marsh RSPB, 22nd October (J. Scott *et al.*).
- Suffolk Boyton and Hollesley Marshes RSPB, two, 5th October (J. Reece, O. R. Slessor *et al.*); presumed same Dingle Marshes RSPB and Minsmere RSPB, intermittently 7th–20th October, photo (J. H. Grant, P. Green, J. Trew *et al.*). Ipswich, three, 15th October (R. & Y. Marsh). Orfordness, 20th October, ringed, photo (D. Crawshaw, E. D. Shields). Minsmere RSPB, 26th–27th November, photo (I. Beeton, B. Torode).
- Sussex Near Eastbourne then Pett Pools, adult, 18th October (J. Gallop, S. Phillips, S. Walsh). Pevensey Levels and Beachy Head, adult, 29th–31st October, photo (R. Bown, D. R. & J. F. Cooper, R. D. M. Edgar *et al.*).
- Yorkshire Hornsea Mere, 13th October (L. Ives *et al.*). Filey Dams, first-winter, 27th October to 9th November, photo (N. Halles *et al.* per Yorkshire Recorder).
- 2009 Kent Swalecliffe, first-winter, 8th October (A. Taylor). Ham Road GP, 16th December (G. J. A. Burton).
- 2009 Norfolk Haddiscoe Island, 14th September; note revised year, previously listed as 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 572–573.

Another bumper arrival of Glossy Ibises in 2011 brought us more headaches in terms of estimating the real numbers involved. In January there were just two sightings, of presumably the same bird that had overwintered from 2010 in Berkshire. None was then reported until early May when there were four sightings of a single adult, from Essex, Leicestershire, Buckinghamshire and Norfolk (in that order), presumed to relate to just one, mobile individual. Then, late in September, two appeared in Wales, three in Dorset and seven on the Isle of Wight, the largest single count of the year. A steady stream of sightings ensued, through to the end of October, when new reports dropped considerably; there were just four in November and three in December, in Lancashire, Scilly and Devon. The Lancashire and Scilly birds both saw in the New Year, as did two in Kent (which had arrived in October).

In 2009 and 2010, a major arrival in early September preceded a widespread dispersal of birds across the country. In those years, we counted the birds in that main arrival then assumed that all

subsequent sightings related to them – an approach bolstered by the fact that several birds in both the 2009 and 2010 influxes were individually colour-ringed and were seen again at different locations within Britain. In 2011, there was a moderate arrival (of 12 birds) in late September, none of them colour-ringed. Except for cases where birds have been seen commuting between nearby sites (all clearly marked in the list above), we have treated each of the autumn sightings as separate birds. We accept that there will be a degree of duplication but the ‘ibis fatigue’ among observers referred to in last year’s report will have led to some omissions too. This approach takes us to a total of 40 new birds for the year (one in spring, 32 in September/October and seven in November/December), which is in line with the totals in 2009 and 2010 of 38 and 22 respectively.

(Breeds S France & Spain; otherwise, European breeding range centred N & W of Black Sea in Ukraine & Romania, with small, declining population in Balkans. To E, breeds from Volga River to Kazakhstan. Migratory, most wintering E Africa, but W European population winters Morocco & Mediterranean basin. Resident or dispersive populations occur Africa, S Asia, Australia, E USA & the Caribbean to N South America.)

Pied-billed Grebe *Podilymbus podiceps* (0, 38, 1)

Argyll Salen Bay, Mull, 22nd March to 6th April, photo (B. Ofield *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 145).

(Breeds throughout North America from C Canada S through USA to C America, the Caribbean & much of South America. Northern populations migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico.)

Short-toed Eagle *Circaetus gallicus* (0, 1, 1)

Devon Dawlish Warren, 16th October (L. Collins, D. Jewell); presumed same Orcombe Point, Exmouth, 16th October (A. Bellamy).

Panicking waders and gulls alerted the Dawlish Warren observers to the presence of this impressive and distinctive raptor as it drifted over their heads. They were able to follow it as far as Exmouth, where it was found independently as it gained height over the cliffs at Orcombe Point, being mobbed by gulls and crows. Since the first Short-toed Eagle for Jersey had been seen just a few days earlier, it seems likely that the same individual was involved.

The Short-toed Eagle suffered a large decline in numbers and a significant range contraction throughout Europe in the nineteenth century as a result of both persecution and habitat change. More recently, however, records have increased in northern Europe and it now occurs annually in the Netherlands, where there were 53 records to 2010 (Ovaa *et al.* 2011). In Sweden it is appearing with increasing frequency, with nine between 2008 and 2010, and eight in 2011 (<http://sweden.observado.org/soort/stats/324>), between August and October. The English Channel does seem to form a genuine barrier that prevents most broad-winged raptors from reaching these shores. Finding Britain’s second Short-toed Eagle is a fabulous reward for these local patch workers, and means that the 1999 Scilly bird can no longer be regarded as a one-off.

(Breeds NW Africa N to N France, & E through C Europe to Estonia & S to Balkans. To E, breeds E through Turkey & Israel to Caucasus Mountains, Iran & India, also European Russia to Urals, S Siberia, C Asia, W China & N Mongolia. Winters Africa S of Sahara, Iran, India & occasionally to Indochina & Malay Peninsula.)

Hen Harrier *Circus cyaneus*

North American race, ‘Northern Harrier’ *C. c. hudsonius* (0, 3, 0)

Norfolk Various sites between Holme and Morston, first-winter male, 27th October 2010 to 27th February, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 574–575, plates 300–301.

(Race *hudsonius* breeds Alaska E to Canadian Maritime Provinces, S throughout Canada & USA from California E to Pennsylvania & Maryland, & S to Baja California, Mexico. Northern populations migratory, wintering from USA S throughout C America to N Colombia.)

Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus* (2, 27, 29)

Argyll Pennyghael, Mull, juvenile, 20th–24th September, photo (B. Rains). Machrihanish, juvenile, 22nd September, photo (E. Maguire *et al.*).

Avon Near Blagdon Lake, juvenile male, 30th September (P. A. Gregory *et al.*); also seen Somerset.



323. Juvenile female Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Garnock Floods, Ayrshire, October 2011.

Ayrshire Garnock Floods, juvenile female, 27th October to 7th November, photo (G. McAdam *et al.*) (plate 323).

Bedfordshire Tempsford, juvenile, 3rd October (L. E. Stevens, M. A. Ward); also seen Cambridgeshire.

Cambridgeshire Sugley Wood, Gamlingay, juvenile, 2nd–3rd October, photo (D. B. Carey, S. M. Elsom); also seen Bedfordshire.

Cleveland Dormans Pool, Saltholme RSPB and nearby sites, juvenile, 20th–23rd October, photo (I. Forrest *et al.*).

Essex St Osyth and Colne Point, juvenile, 17th–18th September, photo (C. Atkins, S. Cox *et al.*).

Fair Isle Malcolm's Head then other areas, juvenile, 12th–15th August, photo (D. Parnaby, N. Riddiford *et al.*). Gilsetter then other areas, juvenile, 11th–14th September, photo (C. Armour, J. Moss, N. Sutherland *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Salakee, St

Mary's, juvenile male, 29th–30th August, photo (J. K. Higginson *et al.* per Scilly Recorder). Parsonage, St Agnes then sites on St Mary's, Bryher and Tresco, juvenile, 29th September to 2nd October, photo (M. Rayment, G. Ryan *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe Pools RSPB, juvenile, 24th–27th September, photo (C. Gibbard *et al.* per Kent Recorder).

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary and Blackdog, juvenile, 1st October, photo (P. A. A. Baxter, C. N. Gibbins, N. A. Littlewood *et al.*).

Orkney The Loons RSPB and Marwick, Mainland, juvenile, 23rd–28th September, photo (A. J. Leitch, E. R. Meek *et al.*). Hooking, North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 25th–28th September, photo (D. M. Edgar, A. Forsyth *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Between East Ilsley and Blewbury, juvenile, 8th September, photo (R. Wyatt).

Shetland Isle of Noss then Ander Hill, Bressay, juvenile, 24th–26th August (J. G. Brown, C. Dodd). Norwick and other sites, Unst, juvenile female, 25th August to 14th September, photo (R. Brookes *et al.*) (plate 324). Sandgarth and Sand Water, Mainland, juvenile, 31st August, photo (M. S. Chapman, A. Gerrard, R. W. Tait *et al.*). Quendale and other sites, Mainland, juvenile, 3rd September to 17th October, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*). Virkie and other sites, Mainland, juvenile, 10th–19th September, photo (R. M. Fray, R. Riddington *et al.*). Loch of Hillwell, Mainland, juvenile, 11th September, photo (H. R. Harrop). Arisdale, Yell, juvenile, 12th–16th September,

photo (D. Hunt, D. Preston *et al.*). East Burrafirth, Mainland, juvenile, 17th September, photo (M. S. Chapman). Brake, Mainland, juvenile, 28th September to 1st October, photo (P. M. Ellis, G. Petrie, K. D. Shaw *et al.*). Fetlar, juvenile, 30th September to 5th October, photo (P-A. Crochet, B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 377). Channerwick area and Boddam, Mainland, 4th–10th October, photo, presumed same Trondra, 7th October (R. M. Fray, J. D. Okill, H. Watson *et al.*). Bardister, North Roe, Mainland, juvenile, 9th October (R. J. Curtis).

Somerset Black Down, juvenile male, 28th September to 16th October, photo (N. J. Voaden *et al.*); also seen Avon.

Sussex North Stoke and Burpham, juvenile, 15th September to 7th October, photo (B. F. Forbes *et al.*).

The headline figures say that the number of Pallid Harriers seen in Britain in the autumn of 2011 matched the total for all other years combined. The reality is certainly more complicated, but working out whether different sightings involved the same birds moving between sites proved to be fraught with difficulties. Consequently, we have published sightings as submitted, with the proviso that there is probably some duplication; in many cases, the variation in the quality of descriptions and photographs made it impossible to make valid comparisons.

Several birds in Shetland help to illustrate the problems. For example, a distinctive bird frequented the area around Quendale for six weeks from 3rd September. Its plumage was presumably oiled in a close encounter with a Fulmar *Fulmarus glacialis* after it arrived in Shetland – this is not uncommon for migrant raptors. The observers of the bird on Noss and Bressay in August suggested that it resembled *their* bird – although it was not Fulmar-oiled at the time – but there is nothing conclusive to link the records. The prolonged stay of the oiled bird was presumably related to its condition, yet it was still capable of ranging as far as Sandwick, 12+ km to the north, during its stay. Four more juvenile Pallids were subsequently claimed in the south Mainland of Shetland during its stay: the presence of two birds with clean plumage on 11th September



Rob Brookes

324. Juvenile female Pallid Harrier *Circus macrourus*, Northdale, Unst, August 2011.

was suggested by good-quality digital photographs, showing very small but consistent differences in the barring on the outermost primary, and one of these remained until 19th September; a third, which appeared quite different in the photos available, was seen for a few days from 28th September; and a fourth was seen, but not photographed well, in October. Another juvenile, first seen in another part of Mainland on 31st August was very similar to one found on Fetlar on 30th September: both birds showed an unusually restricted dark 'boa' and closely resembled each other in many other respects. Again, close examination of photos appeared to show differences in the pattern of primary barring (although not all the observers, or indeed all Committee members, were convinced that the discrepancies were not simply due to differences in the quality of the images).

So did all the sightings in 2011 involve different individuals? Did some of the later sightings in Shetland involve birds seen earlier in the autumn? Did some sightings south of Shetland involve birds that had earlier passed through Shetland? Although it seems likely that some individuals were subsequently relocated at different sites, the evidence is inconclusive. Whatever the real total for 2011, it was undoubtedly a record year. The previous best annual total was just five, in both 1993 and 2003. The 1993 influx (two in spring and three in autumn) was unprecedented, since there were just three previous British records. Since then, the species has become increasingly frequent, and 2008 is the only blank year since 2000.

The 2011 influx began early and continued much later into the autumn than usual. September is firmly established as the peak month for arrivals, accounting for almost half of all records. In August 2011, five birds arrived in Shetland or Fair Isle, and the bird on Fair Isle from 12th August – probably seen on Foula the day before – was the earliest juvenile seen in Britain. The only previous August records involved a subadult male in Kent from 3rd August 2002; another subadult male, which summered in Cambridgeshire in 2009; and a juvenile at Loch of Spiggie, Shetland from 23rd August 2007. Late autumn birds are equally rare; other than those in 2011, only two have been found in October (in Yorkshire in 1952 and Norfolk in 2010). The two juveniles found in December, in Norfolk in 2002 and Cornwall in 2009, now become even more noteworthy. Nonetheless, wintering ringtail harriers should be checked carefully: a bird successfully overwintered in Co. Galway from November 2011 to April 2012 (it was one of four in Ireland in 2011, the first to be recorded there, the others being found in April, August and October).

Although autumn records predominate, there have also been 12 arrivals in spring, on widely scattered dates from late March (Cornwall, 2003) through to late June.

(Breeds from Ukraine E through Russia to c. 100°E, & S to Kazakhstan & NW China. Occasionally breeds Finland. Migratory, wintering throughout much of E & C Africa, & Indian subcontinent.)



David Edgar

325. First-summer male Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni*, North Ronaldsay, Orkney, September 2011.

Lesser Kestrel *Falco naumanni* (9, 8, 1)

Orkney North Ronaldsay, first-summer male, 20th–21st September, photo (M. Warren *et al.*) (plate 325).

(Fragmented breeding range throughout Mediterranean basin from Portugal, Spain & Morocco E to Ukraine, Turkey & Caspian Sea, then E to E Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Gyr Falcon *Falco rusticolus* (222, 165, 4)

Angus & Dundee Glen Esk, adult white-morph, 10th April (R. Downing).

Orkney Orphir and Stromness, Mainland, 27th November to 2nd December; presumed same Ward Hill, Hoy, 30th December, immature white-morph, photo (S. Cogle, T. Delaney, C. White *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Butt of Lewis, Lewis, immature white-morph, 21st March, photo (B. A. E. Marr, J. Sievwright). Grenitote, North Uist, immature white-morph, 25th–26th March, photo (J. & S. Boyle, B. Rabbitts *et al.*); presumed same Lochportain, North Uist, 16th April, photo (B. & L. Lowe).

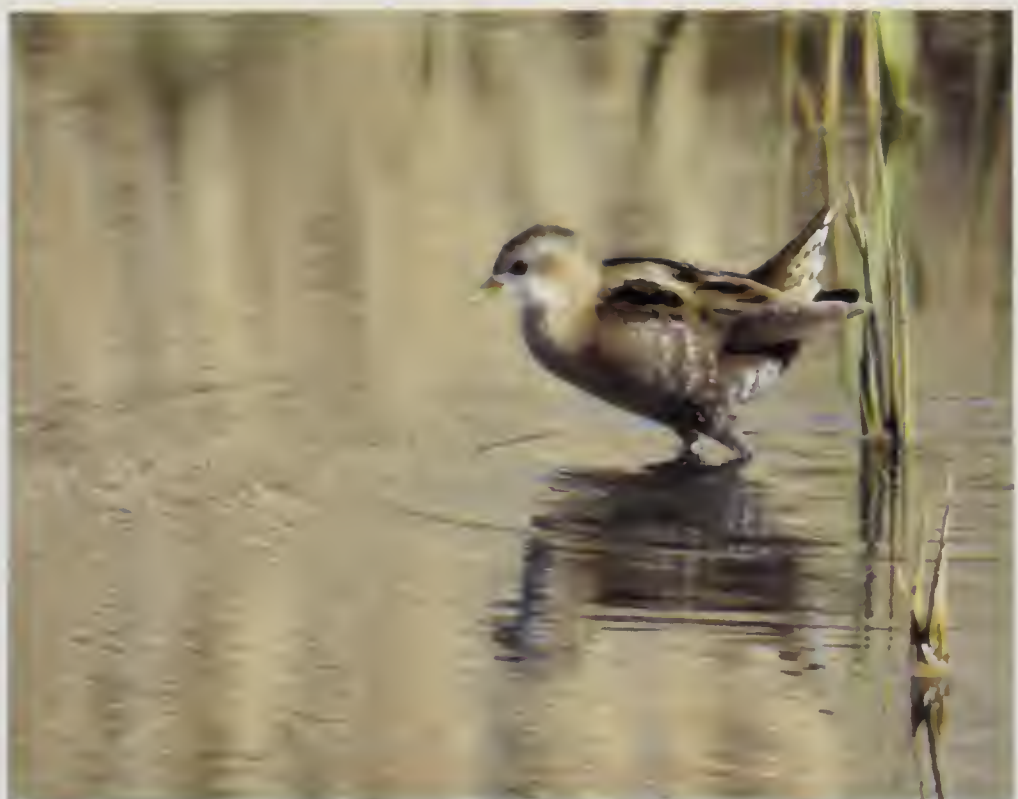
(In Europe, most numerous Iceland & Norway, smaller populations breeding N Sweden, Finland & Arctic Russia. To E, breeds Arctic Siberia, Alaska, N Canada & Greenland. European birds mostly resident but high-Arctic breeders from N Canada & Greenland migratory, occasionally wintering S to NW Europe.)

Little Crane *Porzana parva* (70, 37, 1)

Sussex Arundel WWT, female, 9th–12th April, photo (J. Boon, O. Mitchell *et al.*) (plate 326).

Given its preferred habitat and secretive nature, the Little Crane is probably under-recorded in Britain, although vagrants are often found in rather atypical settings and can be ridiculously tame – notably the confiding ditch-dweller at Cuckmere Haven, Sussex, in March 1985. This species is maintaining a fairly steady occurrence pattern, currently averaging a little over one every two years since 1950, although four in 1973 was exceptional. Sussex and Norfolk (each with 15) are the best places to find one, with Devon (10) in third place, but it has also occurred in several inland counties (remarkably, since 1950, Nottinghamshire is the top county, with four!). Records are split fairly evenly between spring (March to May) and autumn (September to November), and this year's bird fits neatly into the pattern of a favoured county and an optimal time.

(Breeds across temperate steppe region from Austria E through Ukraine & European Russia to W Siberia, C Kazakhstan & NW China. Small numbers occasionally breed to N & W, reaching Netherlands, Finland & Spain. Most winter NE & E Africa, although some W to Senegal.)



Nick Bond

326. Female Little Crane *Porzana parva*, Arundel WWT, Sussex, April 2011.

Purple Gallinule *Porphyrio martinica* (0, 2, 1)

Devon Hornden, Mary Tavy, first-winter, 24th January, found dead, photo (J. Harris, G. & I. Lamb).

The Purple Gallinule shows a remarkable tendency to vagrancy, having been recorded from most islands in the Atlantic (Parkin & Knox 2010). This is likely to be linked to both their dispersive ability and their relatively poor flight performance, making them susceptible to relocation in strong winds (Taylor *et al.* 1998).

With this record from Devon, and a juvenile on Madeira on 25th October 2011, there are now 20 Western Palearctic records of this species, including eight on the Azores (with arrivals in no fewer than seven different months). That all three British, as well as many of the Western Palearctic, records have been of birds found dead or dying in sub-prime habitat is seemingly typical of vagrant gallinules: both British Allen's Gallinules *P. alleni* were picked up exhausted before succumbing. Perhaps the vagrant gallinules which find more suitable, marshy habitat are simply being overlooked.

The Purple Gallinule withdraws from northern parts of its breeding range in winter, and at that season in the USA it is found mainly in southern Florida. However, some individuals turn up as far north as Canada at any season, and these birds are believed to originate from much farther south in the range – the species is nomadic and migratory in South America, and one of the most frequent American wanderers to southern Africa (Kaufman 1997). An analysis of records from the southwestern Cape Province of South Africa showed that the majority of records involve juveniles, between late April and early July, with an apparent link to periods of strong westerly winds (Silbernagl 1982).

Evidence to support the assertions by some that European records of this species are escapes from captivity has not yet been forthcoming.

(Breeds USA from South Carolina to Texas, S through C America & Caribbean to N Argentina. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis* (0, 3, 1)

Cleveland Hartlepool, adult, 29th September, photo (R. C. Taylor *et al.*); presumed same South Gare, Redcar, 29th September (G. N. Megson *et al.*), and Warsett Hill, Brotton, heading south, 29th September, photo (D. A. Money *et al.*); also seen Durham, Norfolk, North-east Scotland, Northumberland, Suffolk.

Co. Durham Cleadon Hill, adult, 29th September, photo (M. Newsome *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Norfolk, North-east Scotland, Northumberland, Suffolk.

Norfolk Snettisham RSPB, adult, 1st October, photo (per Norfolk Recorder); also seen Cleveland, Durham, North-east Scotland, Northumberland, Suffolk.

North-east Scotland Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, adult, 22nd–26th September, photo (D. Funnell *et al.*) (plate 327); also seen Cleveland, Durham, Norfolk, Northumberland, Suffolk.

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea and Holywell Pond, adult, 29th September, photo (E. Barnes, A. Curry *et al.*); also seen Cleveland, Durham, Norfolk, North-east Scotland, Suffolk.

Suffolk Kessingland, heading south, adult, 2nd October, photo (C. Darby) (fig. 1); presumed same North Warren RSPB, 2nd October, photo (S. Abbott *et al.*), and Boyton and Hollesley Marshes RSPB, 2nd–7th October, photo (per Suffolk Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 378); also seen Cleveland, Durham, Norfolk, North-east Scotland, Northumberland.

There have been three previous British records of Sandhill Crane: Fair Isle, 26th–27th April 1981; Exnaboe, Shetland, 17th–26th September 1991; and South Ronaldsay, Orkney, 22nd–29th September 2009 (with the last bird also being seen along the coast of Highland on the last date). Like the previous three, this year's bird was initially discovered in northern Scotland but this one was tracked as it made its way south along the English east coast, which was widely appreciated – for a single bird to increase the total of so many county lists is surely unprecedented. Reports from Whitby (on 29th September) and Rimac (on 1st October) would have cemented its place on the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire lists respectively, but unfortunately no documentation came in to



Joseph Nichols

327. Adult Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, North-east Scotland, September 2011.



Richard Allen

Fig. 1. Adult Sandhill Crane *Grus canadensis*, Boyton, Suffolk, October 2011.

support those sightings. Perhaps some of those waiting for it to continue down the Yorkshire coast after being seen in Cleveland may content themselves with using the old county boundaries?

The sighting in Norfolk was one where the finders were unaware of the species involved. They had been visiting Snettisham RSPB reserve for a Wader Spectacular day. On seeing this particularly spectacular wading bird they took a photo and then, returning to the reserve two days later, showed it to the warden, Jim Scott, who realised the enormity of what had slipped by. By then the bird was already in Suffolk, so an opportunity to add Sandhill Crane to many Norfolk lists had gone. It found a Suffolk stubble at Boyton much to its liking, however, and stayed there for almost a week, occasionally commuting to the nearby RSPB reserves at Boyton and Hollesley. But as rare birds so often do, it departed on the Friday and was not seen again.

It has been suggested that this could have been the same individual seen on migration with Common Cranes *G. grus* in Finland and Estonia earlier in the month and then again later in Spain. Yet this seems unlikely – that it should leave its companions, cross the Baltic and northern North Sea to Scotland, changing course to travel south along the east coast of Britain before arriving in Spain and teaming up again with Common Cranes. A more plausible scenario might be that the bird in Finland and Estonia was the 2009 Orkney/Highland bird, now ‘settled’ in Europe and migrating and wintering with Common Cranes.

(Breeds NE Siberia & North America from Alaska E to Baffin Island, S to NE California to Michigan, & SE USA from S Mississippi to Florida, also Cuba. Northern breeders winter C & SW USA to NW & C Mexico. SE USA breeders resident.)

Black-winged Stilt *Himantopus himantopus* (134, 264, 7)

Cornwall St Gothian Sands, four, three first-summer/females and one male, 8th May, photo (P. J. Freestone *et al.*); also seen Essex.

Dorset Radipole Lake RSPB, female, 20th May, photo (I. M. Stanley *et al.*).

Essex Wat Tyler CP, four, three first-summer/females and one male, 30th April, photo (S. Arlow *et al.*); also seen Cornwall.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Martin Mere WWT, two, adults, 15th April, photo (C. Tomlinson *et al.*).

(Breeds along Atlantic coast of France & locally throughout Mediterranean basin to Black Sea. To E, breeds from S Siberia & C Asia to NW China & S to Hong Kong. Most European birds winter sub-Saharan Africa &, increasingly, in SW Iberia. Asian breeders winter S & SE Asia & S China. Other distinctive races occur in Australasia, the Americas & Hawaii.)



Graham Catley

328. Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola*, Rosper Road Pools, Lincolnshire, May 2011.

Collared Pratincole *Glareola pratincola* (32, 70, 1)

Kent Dungeness RSPB, 10th May, photo (O. J. Leyshon, D. Walker *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire, Yorkshire.

Lincolnshire Rosper Road Pools, 27th April to 7th May, photo (T. C. Lowe *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 191; plate 328); also seen Kent, Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Spurn, 24th April, photo (A. A. Hutt *et al.*); also seen Kent, Lincolnshire.

2003 Kent Cliffe Pools RSPB, 20th May (P. Larkin, D. Mercer).

(Breeds locally throughout Mediterranean basin from N Africa & S Iberia to Black Sea, most in S Spain, Portugal & Greece. To E, breeds SW Asia to Pakistan & Kazakhstan but distribution highly fragmented. Winters sub-Saharan Africa. Another race resident Africa.)

Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* (4, 50, 1)

Argyll Lossit Bay, Islay, 31st January, photo (W. T. S. Miles) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 75).

1980 Isles of Scilly Barnaby Lane, St Agnes, first-winter, 15th–27th December (M. T. Cartwright *et al.*) (fig. 2).

The record from Scilly in 1980, together with that for a 1961 Great Reed Warbler (p. 602), seem to be setting new records for belated submissions. The Killdeer included original field notes and sketches (fig. 2), but the observer had somehow overlooked sending them in! We hope that this doesn't set a precedent (our online system is designed to make records easier and quicker to submit: www.bbrc.org.uk/submit-a-sighting) but of course we are more than happy to receive properly documented older submissions, to help make our archives more complete.

Scotland and the southwest of England account for almost two-thirds of all British Killdeer records (Scilly is the leading recording area, with 12, ahead of the Outer Hebrides, with seven). Unsurprisingly, east-coast counties fare badly with no records from such well-watched counties as Northumberland, Cleveland, Lincolnshire, Suffolk and Kent, although there are three Norfolk records. August, September and October are the best months to find many Nearctic shorebirds but not this distinctive plover – in fact, almost three-quarters of the 55 British Killdeers have turned up between November and April, with January being the best month. So in that respect, the Islay bird was true to form.

(Breeds S Alaska, S Canada & throughout USA to Mexico. Northern breeders migratory, wintering S USA & Mexico to Columbia. Other races resident Caribbean & South America.)



M. T. Cartwright

Fig. 2. Three poses of the long-staying Killdeer *Charadrius vociferus* on St Agnes, Scilly, in 1980.



329. Adult male Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii*, Dornoch Point, Highland, June 2011.

Greater Sand Plover *Charadrius leschenaultii* (0, 14, 1)

Highland Dornoch Point, adult male, 16th–24th June, photo (D. MacAskill, R. Swann, D. Tanner *et al.*) (plate 329).

(Race *columbinus* breeds locally C Turkey, Jordan & perhaps Armenia. Nominate race and *crassirostris* breed from E Caspian Sea across C Asia to Mongolia & NW China. Winters along tropical coasts of E Africa, Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Australia.)

Pacific Golden Plover *Pluvialis fulva* (2, 73, 2)

Cornwall Hayle Estuary RSPB, adult, 19th–20th July, photo (P. J. Freestone, M. J. Halliday, A. Hugo *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, adult, 5th July, photo (P. A. Brown, R. J. Else, M. Warren).

(Breeds across Siberian tundra from Yamal Peninsula E to Chukotskiy Peninsula, including New Siberian islands, & W Alaska. Winters Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan, S through SE Asia to Australia, New Zealand & islands in C Pacific, small numbers regular Kenya & Persian Gulf.)

Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla* (0, 99, 16)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, juvenile, 10th–20th November, photo (R. M. Andrews, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cleveland Saltholme RSPB, adult, 31st July to 5th August, photo (J. Grieveson, C. Sharp *et al.*).

Saltholme RSPB, juvenile, 22nd October to 26th November, photo (J. A. Kennerley, J. F. Wright *et al.*).

Cornwall Drift Resr, juvenile, 13th–18th September, photo (C. Bollen *et al.*). Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, 2nd–6th October, photo (S. Rogers *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 380).

Devon Axe Estuary, juvenile, 24th September to 3rd October, photo (P. & P. Abbott, S. D. Waite *et al.*) (plate 330).

Essex East Tilbury, juvenile, 1st–9th October, photo (P. R. Wood *et al.*); also seen Kent.

Gloucestershire The Dumbles, Severn Estuary, juvenile, 18th–29th September, photo (M. McGill *et al.*).

Hampshire Keyhaven Marshes and Pennington Marshes, juvenile, 24th September to 2nd October, photo (A. Lewis, M. P. Moody, T. Parmenter *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe Pools RSPB, juvenile, 25th September (J. K. Archer, R. H. Bonser); also seen Essex.

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, juvenile, 26th September to 4th October, photo (P. S. Crockett *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Peninerine, South Uist, juvenile, 15th–17th September, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. B. Kemp *et al.*). Kilpheder, South Uist, juvenile, 21st September (J. B. Kemp, A. Stevenson). Northton, Harris, juvenile, 25th–26th September, photo (S. J. Dodgson), presumed same 7th and 10th November (M. S. Scott *et al.*). Ardivachar Point, South Uist, two, juveniles, 4th–5th October, photo (J. B. Kemp *et al.*).

Shetland Pool of Virkie, Mainland, adult, 2nd–5th August, photo (R. M. Fray, R. Riddington).

A record year for this inconspicuous ‘peep’, but a new peak is not that surprising – this species is becoming increasingly frequent. Of the 115 accepted records, 73% have been in a 20-year run of annual occurrences dating back to 1992. This year’s total only just exceeds the previous record, 15 in 1999, although there has been no other year with more than six.

The recent increase has undoubtedly been at least partly due to increasing observer confidence with the identification criteria. Seeing the toe palmations is no longer essential, as it was for the first British record in 1953, when Richard Richardson spent time in the mud at Arnold’s Marsh (Cley, Norfolk) trying to find a perfectly preserved footprint to clinch the identification. Good photos, perhaps even showing the semi-palmations, certainly do help, but observers have got a feel for the overall appearance of typical juveniles: a dull, greyish, rather stocky stint with a thick, stubby bill, no pale ‘V’ on the back and a broad supercilium. Not all juveniles are straightforward: some are brighter, recalling Little Stint *C. minuta* and others are long-billed, leading to confusion with Western Sandpiper. Even trickier are worn, late-summer adults, which can easily be overlooked. Despite the increasing frequency of the species, submissions still require good documentation, preferably with photographs and with observers showing an understanding of the problems of eliminating other stints, including Red-necked *C. ruficollis*. Proving the identity of a distant stint with poor photographs (or none at all) is still not an easy proposition.

The best recording area for the species is the Outer Hebrides. The five there in 2011 take the total for the islands to 16, even though the first was as recent as the 1999 influx, when there were seven. Other recording areas with good totals are all in southwest England: Scilly (12), Cornwall (10) and Devon (8). Overall, 33% of records are from southwest England and 29% from Scotland; given this westerly bias, it is no surprise that at least 86 have been seen in Ireland. British records tend to come from coastal locations, but birds are occasionally seen inland, such as the one this year at Chew Valley Lake; in the 1999 influx, one was even seen as far from the sea as Northamptonshire.

Semipalmated Sandpipers in Britain have turned up at almost any time from early May to mid



Steve Waite

330. Juvenile Semipalmated Sandpiper *Calidris pusilla*, Axe Estuary, Devon, September 2011.

November, but there is a distinct peak in September, which accounts for almost half of all records. Although there was none in spring in 2011, 12 have been found in May or June. In autumn, adults may appear from July to mid September and juveniles from late August to November.

(Breeds on tundra of W Alaska, E across Arctic Canada to S Baffin Island & coastal Labrador. Has bred extreme NE Siberia. Migrates across Great Plains & E seaboard of USA to winter C America & coasts of tropical South America to Brazil & Peru.)

Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (0, 7, 1)

Norfolk Cley Marshes and Blakeney Harbour, first-winter, 28th November into 2012, photo (M. A. Golley et al.) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plates 72, 261, 331).

Problem peeps have long been part of the British birding scene, the famous 'Felixstowe Stint' that spent the winter of 1982/83 in Suffolk being a fine example. It took several years for the identification of that individual to be finally decided, so the two days it took to sort out the Cley bird represents a significant improvement! The initial identification as a Semipalmated Sandpiper (in itself a bold call on a tiny and rather distant wader) attracted a comforting degree of international support when the first photographs of it were uploaded to the internet – and everything seemed fine. However, with ever bigger lenses focusing on the bird, and alternative images being e-mailed to identification experts, more pertinent morsels of evidence began to gel and the bird's true identity emerged. A set of photographs taken by Steve Gantlett included an image that captured tiny patches of ginger coloration at the shoulders, and these fiery 'epaulettes' clinched the deal: it was in fact a Western Sandpiper. Once the identification had been decided, all the key elements could be looked for, scrutinised and double-checked; now, the overall structure, the bill shape, the scapular pattern, the moult progress and even the feeding action all made perfect sense.

Fortunately, over the next few weeks, a steady stream of visitors were able to see the bird for themselves and practice the fine art of tricky peeping. As it turned out, this first for Norfolk also became the first Western Sandpiper to overwinter in Britain, and remained at Cley into 2012, finally departing only with the onset of a deep freeze at the end of January. This popular bird constituted the eighth for Britain, and the first to be twitchable since a juvenile in Dorset (on Brownsea Island, Poole Harbour), from 29th September until 15th October 2004. Among the thin scatter of Western Sandpipers elsewhere in Europe, four have been recorded in Ireland. Although both Western and Semipalmated Sandpipers breed in the high Arctic, the latter vacates North America in winter and migrates deep into the southern hemisphere, whereas the wintering

range of the former extends from coastal USA to northern South America; unlike Semipalmated, Western is not a true trans-equatorial migrant. This alone explains why Western is so much the rarer of the two in Britain.

(Breeds Chukotskiy Peninsula, NE Siberia, & coastal tundra of W & N Alaska. Migrates through North America to winter coastal California, Gulf of Mexico & Atlantic coast N to North Carolina, & S to C America, Venezuela & Peru.)



Steve Gantlett

331. First-winter Western Sandpiper *Calidris mauri* (front) and Dunlin *C. alpina*, Cley Marshes, Norfolk, December 2011.

Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla* (4, 29, 3)

Isles of Scilly South Beach then Great Pool, Tresco, juvenile, 4th–15th October, photo (R. A. Filby *et al.* per Scilly Recorder).

Shetland South Ness, Foula, juvenile, 14th–24th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton, P. R. French *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 381; plate 332).

Yorkshire Old Moor RSPB, 26th May, photo (C. Harris *et al.*).

Least Sandpiper remains a genuinely rare bird in Britain, averaging almost exactly one every two years since 1950: three in a year equals the previous best annual total, in 1988. In contrast to many North American waders, there is no sign of a recent upturn in numbers; the best decade was the 1980s with eight, but there were five in each of the 1960s, 70s, 90s and the first decade of the present century.

The distribution of the 36 records shows a distinct bias towards southwest England, where there have been 15, including four shot in the nineteenth century. The Scilly bird in 2011 was, surprisingly, only the second for the islands, following one on St Agnes in 1962. Another seven have been recorded in southeast England, eight more elsewhere in England, one in Wales (in East Glamorgan in 1972) and five in Scotland. The bird in Yorkshire in 2011 was only the third in spring, following one at Farlington Marshes (Hampshire) on 22nd May 1977 and another at gravel-pits in Staffordshire and Warwickshire on 23rd–25th May 2002. Most occur in autumn, with arrival dates between 17th July and 24th October, although a first-winter was at Portscatho, Cornwall, from 9th February to 20th April 1986.

On passage in North America and in wintering areas in northern South America, Least Sandpipers seem to frequent fresh water more than other calidrids (*BWP*), and there is a clear tendency for birds in Britain to be found beside fresh water, sometimes far inland. Nine of the British records, including the spring bird in 2011, were at inland sites (and two of the three in 1988 were well inland, in Derbyshire and Worcestershire). Others have been found near the coast but on fresh water: the Foula bird of 2011 frequented a small freshwater pool in coastal grassland while the Tresco bird moved between fresh water at the Great Pool and the nearby beach. Checking freshwater pools is clearly a good tactic for anyone trying to find this species on this side of the Atlantic.

(Breeds C & S Alaska, E across N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Winters S USA, C America, the Caribbean & South America, S to Brazil & N Chile.)



Jim Nicolson

332. Juvenile Least Sandpiper *Calidris minutilla*, South Ness, Foula, Shetland, September 2011.

Baird's Sandpiper *Calidris bairdii* (1, 226, 11)

Argyll Loch Indaal, Islay, juvenile, 4th–5th September, photo (J. M. Dickson, P. Roberts *et al.*).
Sandaig, Tiree, juvenile, 26th–27th September, photo (J. Bowler, J. M. Dickson).

Cornwall Hayle Estuary RSPB, juvenile, 30th August to 11th September, photo (D. K. Parker *et al.*).

Fair Isle North Haven, juvenile, 24th September, photo (A. Hitching, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

Hampshire Pennington Marshes, juvenile, 14th–18th September, photo (J. R. Waterman *et al.*).

Isle of Man Langness, juvenile, 17th–21st September, photo (B. Liggins, C. Wormwell per Isle of Man Recorder).

Isles of Scilly Big Pool, St Agnes, juvenile, 8th–18th September, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Orkney Linklet Bay, North Ronaldsay, juvenile, 29th October to 17th November, trapped, photo (R. J. Else *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Ardroil, Lewis, juvenile, 13th September, photo (R. Johnson, S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Loch Paible, North Uist, juvenile, 21st September, photo (R. Jansen, B. Rabbitts).
Balgarna, South Uist, juvenile, 4th–5th October, photo (J. B. Kemp).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia on Chukotskiy Peninsula & Wrangel Island, E across N Alaska & Arctic Canada to N Baffin Island & NW Greenland. Migrates through North American interior to winter South American Andes, from S Ecuador to Tierra del Fuego.)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata* (4, 26, 1)

Avon Blagdon Lake and Chew Valley Lake, juvenile, 18th November to 16th December, photo (R. Mielcarek, N. R. Milbourne *et al.*) (plate 33).

Cleveland Greatham Creek, adult, 9th September, photo (M. Leakey *et al.*) (plate 333), presumed same as Cleveland 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 581.

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper heads up a small band of vagrant waders breeding in Arctic Siberia, including Great Knot *C. tenuirostris* and Red-necked Stint, which arrive here mainly as adults in late summer and autumn. Of the previous 30 British records of Sharp-tailed Sandpiper, just three were aged as juveniles (Holbeach, Lincolnshire, on 24th August 1985; Shotton, Flintshire, on 14th–24th October 1973; and Morfa Harlech, Meirionnydd, on 14th–15th October 1973) before this year's bird in Avon. In addition, the description of the first for Scotland, at Hamilton, Clyde, on 13th–21st October 1956 (Meiklejohn *et al.* 1959) strongly suggests that it would be more accurately termed a juvenile; it has been widely published as a first-winter (e.g. Britton 1980, Forrester *et al.* 2007).

In some ways the preponderance of adults in late summer matches the pattern shown by Stilt Sandpiper, with August (14) and September (10) records predominating, but the causes of the displacement must surely be very different. There are just three October records – listed above, all of

them first-calendar-year birds at west-coast locations – while the Avon juvenile in 2011 was also a late-autumn bird in the west.

In autumn, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers show a remarkable differential migration strategy, unique among Arctic waders, which surely accounts for the occurrence pattern in Britain. The main southward migration of adults begins in early July and continues into August, with males preceding females. Adults migrate rapidly, following an inland route over eastern Siberia and Mongolia to coastal China, and on into Australia, where the first occur in mid August and arrivals peak in early September. The timing suggests that post-breeding adults account for many (but perhaps not all) early autumn European



Roy Harvey

333. Adult Sharp-tailed Sandpiper *Calidris acuminata*, Greatham Creek, Cleveland, September 2011.

records. Juveniles, on the other hand, remain on the breeding grounds until late August before travelling east to staging sites in western Alaska, where they accumulate fat reserves in preparation for a non-stop flight across the Pacific to Australia – a similar strategy to that of Bar-tailed Godwits *Limosa lapponica* and Turnstones *Arenaria interpres*. Their departure from Alaska occurs throughout October with the latest birds remaining until the onset of freezing conditions in late October and early November (Handel & Gill 2010; Lindström *et al.* 2011).

The timing of this departure coincides nicely with the arrival dates of the four late-autumn British first-year birds, while their respective locations also suggest an arrival from the west. Juvenile Sharpies have been found in the eastern USA on several occasions, often with Pectoral Sandpipers *C. melanotos*, which they breed alongside in Arctic Siberia and which also migrate east into North America after breeding. In fact, the adult Sharp-tailed on Scilly in September 1974 was accompanied by three Pectoral Sandpipers, suggesting that it had followed a similar route and made an Atlantic crossing.

(Breeds Siberian tundra from Yana River to Kolyma River delta, possibly farther E. Migrant through coastal Alaska, China & Japan to winter New Guinea, Australia & New Zealand.)

Stilt Sandpiper *Calidris himantopus* (0, 28, 1)

Dorset Lodmoor RSPB, adult, 23rd July to 7th August, photo (D. Croxson, R. Morris *et al.*).

The Stilt Sandpiper has a firmly established vagrancy pattern unique among the North American waders that reach our shores regularly. Late-summer records of adult or first-summer birds in July and August predominate, with nine of these being adults and eight first-summer birds; the next most-frequent month is September, with six, of which four were adults. The dearth of juveniles is surprising: just two in September and one on Unst, Shetland, on 5th–7th November 2002, the latest by a six-week margin. The pattern of Irish records differs slightly. Early autumn adults still prevail and August remains the peak month with six records, but there is just a single July record, while of the four in September and two in October, at least four were juveniles.

The adult birds seen in early autumn have perhaps crossed the Atlantic in previous years and are moving south with adult Pectoral and Curlew Sandpipers *C. ferruginea*. At this season, east-coast records outnumber those from other regions, supporting the idea that arrivals are coming from the northeast. But why juveniles are so rare in the autumn is difficult to explain. Perhaps they cross the Atlantic well to the south of Britain & Ireland, although there is little evidence to support this – there are, for example, just two records from the Azores, a juvenile in October and an adult in late January.

Whatever the reasons for this unusual vagrancy pattern, it does at least give hope to optimistic rarity finders during the quiet summer months, when it ranks alongside White-tailed Lapwing *Vanellus leucurus*, Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* and Blue-cheeked Bee-eater *Merops persicus* as a rarity that shows a midsummer peak.

(Breeds North America from NE Alaska to Hudson Bay, Canada. Migrates through interior & E USA to winter C South America from E Bolivia & S Brazil to NE Argentina. Occasionally winters N to Mexico, Caribbean & S USA.)

Broad-billed Sandpiper *Limicola falcinellus* (15, 220, 4)

Cheshire & Wirral Meols, Hoylake, 15th–20th May, photo (A. M. Conlin, C. E. Wells *et al.*).

Cumbria Bowness-on-Solway, adult, 12th–13th May, photo (D. J. Robson *et al.*).

Norfolk Breydon Water, adult, 27th–28th May, photo (J. Lansdell *et al.*); presumed same 1st–3rd June, photo (P. R. Allard *et al.*).

Nottinghamshire Idle Valley (Lound GP), 13th May, photo (S. Hicking, D. Housman, D. Parmenter *et al.*).

2010 Essex Mersea Island, juvenile, 22nd–27th August, photo (R. Brown, R. Hull *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds N Norway, Sweden & Finland, & Arctic Russia where distribution uncertain. Migrates through E Mediterranean, Black & Caspian Seas to winter Persian Gulf & W India to Sri Lanka, with small numbers coastal E Africa. E Asian race *sibirica* breeds from Taimyr Peninsula E to Kolyma River delta, & winters from Bay of Bengal through coastal SE Asia to Australia.)

John Carter



334. First-winter Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011.

Wilson's Snipe *Gallinago delicata* (0, 6, 1)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors and Porth Hellick, St Mary's, first-winter, 28th September to 24th December, photo (E. A. Fisher, I. Lakin, K. Rylands *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 445; 105: plates 259, 334).

(Breeds throughout North America from N Alaska & N Canada S to N California & North Carolina. Winters SW Canada & throughout USA & C America to N South America.)

Great Snipe *Gallinago media* (532, 158, 5)

Fair Isle Utra, 2nd May, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Kenaby and Schoolton, 29th August to 3rd September, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*). Da Water, 18th September, photo (I. D. & R. C. Broadbent *et al.*).



Steve Gantlett

335. Displaying male Great Snipe *Gallinago media*, Cley Marshes, Norfolk, May 2011.

Norfolk Cley Marshes, male in song, 11th–16th May, photo (A. Hitchon *et al.*) (plate 335).

Shetland Cunningsburgh, Mainland, 29th September (C. Gooddie, B. Harris, G. Hogan).

2010 Yorkshire Spurn, 4th September, photo (R. Hopson *et al.*).

Although the locations and dates of these records are typical, five in one year is the best showing since the late 1990s (there were seven in both 1976 and 1998, but a remarkable 12 in 1996) and the fourth-highest annual total. Although August,

September and October are the best months for Great Snipe in Britain (almost half of all records have been in September), there have been a number of recent records in spring. The booming male in Norfolk was an extraordinary record and one of the highlights of the spring for many.

(Scarce & local breeder Norway & Sweden, which hold most of declining European population. Smaller & fragmented population breeds from Poland to Estonia. Also breeds E through European Russia, W & N Siberia E to Yenisey River. Winters sub-Saharan Africa.)

Long-billed Dowitcher *Limnodromus scolopaceus* (6, 203, 16)

Avon Blagdon Lake and Chew Valley Lake, two, juveniles, 9th October to 11th December, photo (R. Mielcarek, M. Pearce, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*); also seen Somerset.

Ayrshire Lochlea, Maybole, juvenile, 7th–17th October (D. Given, R. H. Hogg *et al.*).

Carmarthenshire Kidwelly, juvenile/first-winter, 29th September into 2012, photo (D. Davidson *et al.* per Carmarthenshire Recorder).

Ceredigion Cors Fochno, Aberdovey, adult, 23rd–28th April, photo (J. Davies, M. Hughes, M. Williams *et al.*).

Clyde Baron's Haugh RSPB, juvenile, 17th September to 5th October, photo (D. Abraham *et al.*); also seen Dumfries & Galloway.

Cornwall Stithians Resr, juvenile, 14th–28th September, photo (A. Blunden *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder). Davidstow Airfield, juvenile, 7th–8th October, photo (A. J. Harris *et al.*).

Dorset Lodmoor RSPB, first-winter, 7th November 2010 to 20th January, photo, see also *Brit. Birds* 104: 583–584; presumed same Poole Park, 31st January to 14th February, photo (per Dorset Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 76), and Lodmoor RSPB/Radipole RSPB, 17th February to 30th April, photo (per Dorset Recorder).

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, juvenile, 7th–13th October, photo (S. Cooper, M. Youdale *et al.*); also seen Clyde. Wigtown Harbour, juvenile, 22nd October to 13th November, photo (G. Chambers *et al.*).

Essex East Tilbury, juvenile/first-winter, 19th November, photo (P. Merchant, P. R. Wood *et al.*).

Kent Oare Marshes, juvenile, 18th September (B. Stafford).

Lincolnshire Freiston Shore RSPB and Frampton Marsh RSPB, juvenile, 26th September to 4th October, photo (K. D. & W. Robertson *et al.*).

Moray & Nairn Lossiemouth, juvenile, 2nd–6th October, photo (D. A. Gibson, R. Proctor *et al.*).

Northumberland East Chevington, two, juvenile/first-winter, 5th October, photo (D. & R. Dack, M. Henry, J. Spraggett *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides West Gerinish, South Uist, juvenile, 10th–15th October, photo (S. E. Duffield, J. B. Kemp).

Somerset Catcott Lows, two, juveniles, 30th November, photo (A. Ashman *et al.* per Somerset Recorder); also seen Avon.

(Breeds Arctic Siberia W to Lena River delta, & coastal tundra of W & N Alaska, E to Mackenzie River, Canada. Migrates through USA to winter coastal S USA to N/C America.)

Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda* (9, 36, 1)

Isles of Scilly Maypole, St Mary's, juvenile, 8th–27th October, photo (P. Davis, C. Johnson, J. F. Lawrence *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 382; plate 336).

2009 Caithness Quoys of Reiss, juvenile, 28th September, photo (D. Brown, T. C. Lowe).

This most charismatic of Nearctic waders would have been a welcome surprise for the finders as they scanned furrowed fields for wheatears *Oenanthe* on Scilly, and golden plovers *Pluvialis* in Caithness. These distinctive birds would have been instantly identified and, with the bonus of photographs, acceptance was an easy task. Well-watched Scilly accounts for about 40% of post-1950 records, with all being in October apart from singles in both September and November. During the same period, about 40% of the records elsewhere in Britain have been in September. Surprisingly, this was the first for Scilly since the two in 1999; less surprising is that the Caithness bird was the first for that under-watched county.

Gary Thoburn



336. Juvenile Upland Sandpiper *Bartramia longicauda*, Maypole, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011.

The name 'Upland Sandpiper' is really a misnomer for this bird. It is only in Alaska that it occupies an upland habitat; throughout most of its range it is a bird of the prairies, but now found in many grassland types within its North American breeding range. Its migration route south in autumn through the centre of the continent renders it less likely to encounter the Atlantic weather systems that bring us most of our North American waders and as a consequence it seems likely to remain a genuine rarity here, particularly as eastern populations are in decline.

(Breeds temperate & subarctic interior North America from SE Alaska through NW & C Canada to Midwest & NE USA. Migrates through interior USA E of Rocky Mountains, Gulf of Mexico & Caribbean to winter South America from S Brazil to Argentina.)

Terek Sandpiper *Xenus cinereus* (0, 73, 1)

Northumberland Hauxley, adult, 28th–30th May, photo (I. Fisher, A. & S. Phillips *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 226).

(European range restricted to small population in N Gulf of Bothnia, Finland, & Belarus. To E, breeds widely throughout N Russia to E Siberia. Winters along coasts of S & E Africa to Persian Gulf, Indian subcontinent, SE Asia & Australasia.)

Spotted Sandpiper *Actitis macularius* (1, 167, 12)

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 24th September into 2012, photo (A. H. Davis *et al.*).

Buckinghamshire Caldecotte Lake, adult, 12th May, photo (K. O'Hagen *et al.*).

Devon Plym Estuary, juvenile, 3rd September into 2012, photo (R. Eynon *et al.*).

Dorset Lyme Regis, first-winter, 18th November into 2012, photo (H. Vaughan *et al.*).

Essex Heybridge GP, first-winter, 2nd–4th December, photo (D. Attrill, N. Green *et al.*).

Gloucestershire Lydney New Grounds, juvenile, 15th–26th September, photo (N. J. & V. E. Phillips *et al.*).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Brockholes, adult, 30th May, photo (W. C. Aspin *et al.*).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, adult, 13th–19th July, photo (A. Rayfield, B. I. Smith *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Whisby Nature Park, adult, 17th June, photo (G. Hopwood, K. Marshall *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Scolpaig, North Uist, juvenile, 4th–17th October, photo (B. Rabbitts *et al.*).

Sussex Swanbourne Lake, Arundel, adult, 10th June (R. Cowser).

Worcestershire Westwood Great Pool, adult, 3rd May, photo (W. Dutton *et al.*).

(Breeds North America from W Alaska to Newfoundland & S to California, Texas & North Carolina. Some winter coastal USA to S of breeding range but most winter C America, Caribbean & N South America, S to N Argentina & Chile.)

Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria* (6, 28, 2)

Isles of Scilly Newford Duck Pond then Lower Moors, St Mary's, juvenile, 14th September to 6th October, photo (C. & J. Moore *et al.*) (plate 337).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Humblescough Farm, Nateby, juvenile, 2nd–6th October, photo (S. G. Piner *et al.*).

(Breeds C & S Alaska E through boreal forest region of Canada to Quebec & Labrador. Migrates throughout USA & winters Caribbean & C America, S to Argentina.)



John Carter

337. Juvenile Solitary Sandpiper *Tringa solitaria*, Newford Duck Pond, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, September 2011.

Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca* (6, 23, 2)

Cornwall Treraven Meadows, adult, 12th–13th September, photo (D. I. Julian, R. Pickford *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Highland Knockglass, Loch Fleet, first-winter, 14th–17th December, photo (D. MacAskill, R. Swann *et al.*) (plate 338); also seen Northumberland.

Northumberland East Chevington, Hauxley, Druridge Bay and Cresswell Pond, first-winter, 12th November to 12th December, photo (K. Dawson, I. Fisher, A. D. McLevy *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 105: plate 34); also seen Highland.

Just over half of all the dated records of Greater Yellowlegs have occurred in the period from September to November, so these two fit that pattern well. The protracted stay of the northern bird provided ample opportunity to twitch what has been a difficult bird to catch up with in recent years.

Interestingly, the number of records in May, presumably birds that have overwintered in Europe or Africa and are migrating north, matches that for October – there are five in each month, followed by four in both September and November). The most favoured county is Scilly, with four records, followed by Kent and the Outer Hebrides, both with three.

(Breeds from S Alaska across subarctic Canada E to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates throughout USA to winter coastal S USA, C America, Caribbean & South America.)

Marcus Conway



338. First-winter Greater Yellowlegs *Tringa melanoleuca*, Knockglass, Loch Fleet, Highland, December 2011.

Lesser Yellowlegs *Tringa flavipes* (19, 292, 17)

Anglesey Llanfachraeth, Alaw Estuary, juvenile, 22nd October to 23rd December, photo (M. Sutton *et al.*).

Argyll Sandaig, Tiree, juvenile, 15th–16th October, photo (J. Bowler, S. T. Green).

Avon Chew Valley Lake, adult, 8th July, photo (K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Cornwall Drift Resr, 14th–27th September, photo (per birding information services) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 383). Tresempole Pool and St Clement, juvenile, 21st September to 20th October, photo (M. Curtis, B. Toms *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder). Kingsmill Lake, Saltash, first-winter, 30th November into 2012, photo (M. Beer *et al.*).

Derbyshire Willington GP, adult, 29th May, photo (R. Pittam); also seen Staffordshire.

Isles of Scilly Porth Killier, St Agnes, juvenile, 11th–13th September, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Porthloo Duck Pond, St Mary's, juvenile, 25th September to 3rd October, photo (R. Sandham *et al.*); presumed same Lower Moors, St Mary's, 26th September to 19th October, photo (G. McMullen *et al.*). Great Pool, Tresempole, first-winter, 3rd October to 15th November, photo (A. H. Davis, K. E. Vinicombe *et al.*).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Glasson and Conder Green, juvenile, 24th September to 4th October, photo (S. G. Piner *et al.*).

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats and Bagmoor Floods, juvenile/first-winter, 30th October into 2012, photo (G. P. Catley *et al.*).

Moray & Nairn Findhorn Bay, 25th September (R. Dennis, D. A. Gibson).

Norfolk Cley Marshes, adult, 11th–17th May, photo (I. Lakin *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Bornish, South Uist, juvenile, 6th–9th October, photo (R. H. Hogg, A. Stevenson *et al.*).

Somerset Meare Heath, adult, 19th–25th April, photo (J. A. Hazell, A. M. Slade, J. L. Thomas *et al.*). Brue Estuary, first-winter, 31st December into 2012, photo (A. M. Slade *et al.*).

Staffordshire Uttoxeter Quarry, adult, 29th–31st May, photo (A. Barker *et al.*); also seen Derbyshire.

(Breeds throughout much of subarctic Alaska & Canada, E to James Bay. Migrates through USA, where some overwinter, but majority winter from Caribbean & C America to Chile & Argentina.)

Marsh Sandpiper *Tringa stagnatilis* (6, 130, 1)

Lincolnshire Alkborough Flats, adult, 11th–21st July, photo (G. P. Catley, N. Drinkall *et al.*); presumed same Boultham Mere, 4th August (D. G. Nicholson, A. C. Sims); also seen Yorkshire. Yorkshire Blacktoft Sands RSPB, adult, 12th July to 3rd August, photo (per birding information services); also seen Lincolnshire.

(Breeds Ukraine & W Russia, & occasionally Finland & Baltic countries. To E, breeds in forest-steppe region of Siberia to Mongolia & NE China. Winters throughout sub-Saharan Africa, especially E Africa, & Indian subcontinent E to S China & SE Asia; also Australia.)

Wilson's Phalarope *Phalaropus tricolor* (0, 237, 1)

Cleveland Greatham Creek, Seal Sands and Greenabella Marsh, 13th–14th August, photo (J. T. Collett *et al.*).

(Breeds interior W Canada S to California & throughout Midwest states of USA; also S Ontario. Most migrate through interior USA & winter South America from Peru S to Argentina & Chile.)

Laughing Gull *Larus atricilla* (1, 190, 2)

Argyll Off Torsa and Luing, juvenile, 14th September, photo (B. Allen, G. Tucker).

Outer Hebrides Garrabost, Lewis, adult, 1st June, photo (M. MacDonald).

(Breeds along E seaboard of USA from Nova Scotia, Canada, S to Florida & Gulf coast, the Caribbean, & C America to N Venezuela. Southern populations largely resident but N breeders winter within southern breeding range.)

Franklin's Gull *Larus pipixcan* (0, 66, 1)

Highland Clashnessie Bay, Drumbeg, first-summer, 17th–18th May, photo (D. & J. Thorogood *et al.*).

(Breeds locally throughout interior provinces of temperate W Canada, E to Great Lakes & S to Midwest USA. Winters along Pacific coast of South America, from Guatemala to Chile.)

Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii* (0, 5, 1)

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, adult, 9th May, photo (J. H. Grant *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 192; plate 339).

Only the sixth record of this elegant gull, yet this is a fairly impressive return in less than a decade, since the first in 2003. The previous records – from Kent (two), Yorkshire, Devon and Lincolnshire – reveal a marked south-/east-coast bias consistent with the origins of this Mediterranean endemic. This is the third sighting in May, the others have been in early June and August (two) – it is clearly difficult to draw too many conclusions from such a small sample size, but this hints at an emerging pattern. All records have involved second-summer or older birds. The absence of records of younger birds is in keeping with the origins of our vagrants (see Gutierrez & Guinart 2008), so, unlike many vagrants, it seems that a first-year bird would be a very special find indeed.

(Breeds locally throughout Mediterranean basin from Spain E to Greece & Turkey, with majority at Ebro Delta & Chafarinas Islands, Spain. Majority winter along the Atlantic seaboard of Africa, from Morocco to Senegal & Gambia.)



Chris Darby

339. Adult Audouin's Gull *Larus audouinii*, Minsmere RSPB, Suffolk, May 2011.

American Herring Gull *Larus smithsonianus* (0, 27, 0)

2004 Norfolk Blackborough End Tip, King's Lynn, second-winter, 28th–29th February; presumed same, 29th May and 5th June, photo (D. E. Balmer, C. A. Holt, P. M. Wilson *et al.*).

(Breeds S Alaska E across C & N Canada to S Baffin Island, Labrador, Newfoundland & NE coastal region of USA. Many resident, others winter S to S USA & Mexico. Other races breed Mongolia to C Siberia, & NE Siberia.)

Bonaparte's Gull *Chroicocephalus philadelphia* (8, 170, 10)

Anglesey Traeth Lligwy, adult, 12th February to 27th March, photo (M. Jones per Anglesey Recorder), presumed same as Anglesey 2009, 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 586.

Argyll Gott Bay, Tiree, first-winter, 4th–21st April, photo (J. Bowler *et al.*).

Caernarfonshire Porthmadog, first-winter, 23rd–31st May, photo (E. Lewis *et al.*).

Cornwall Hayle Estuary RSPB, first-summer, 13th April to 21st May, photo (L. P. Williams *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Devon River Otter, first-winter, 13th–29th April, photo (C. Townend *et al.*); presumed same Dawlish Warren and Exmouth, 18th April to 19th July, photo (L. Collins *et al.*), and Dawlish Warren, 29th–30th August, photo (I. Lakin *et al.*).

Co. Durham Whitburn, adult, 5th August to 17th September, photo (M. Newsome *et al.*); presumed same as Co. Durham 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 586.

East Glamorgan Cardiff Bay, adult, 13th–28th March, photo (G. N. Smith *et al.* per East Glamorgan Recorder), presumed same as East Glamorgan 2009, 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 586.

North-east Scotland Ythan Estuary, first-winter, 6th March, photo, presumed same 8th April to 20th May, photo (H. E. Maggs *et al.*); presumed same Loch of Strathbeg RSPB, 4th–5th June, photo (D. Darrell-Lambert *et al.*). Blackdog, first-winter, 27th November (N. A. Littlewood).

Orkney Kirk Sound and St Mary's Bay, Holm, adult, 6th–9th October, photo (K. E. Hague *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Siadar and Melbost Borge, Lewis, first-summer, 20th April to 8th June, photo (T. ap Rheinallt *et al.*); presumed same Loch Stiapavat, Lewis, 8th May, photo (B. A. E. Marr), and Melbost Borge, 14th–19th August, photo (S. Pinder, T. ap Rheinallt). Berneray, first-summer, 9th June to 19th July, photo (S. E. Duffield *et al.*).

Somerset Berrow, first-summer, 5th June, photo (J. J. Packer *et al.*).

2010 Caithness Thurso, adult, 8th–11th March, photo; note revised county, previously listed under Highland, *Brit. Birds* 104: 586.

(Breeds widely across N North America from W & C Alaska through Canada to James Bay. Winters locally on ice-free rivers & lakes in N USA, & S along both coasts of USA to Mexico & Caribbean.)

Gull-billed Tern *Gelochelidon nilotica* (51, 284, 5)

Cornwall Sennen, adult, 6th–19th April, photo (M. T. Elliot *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

Dorset South Marsh, Stanpit, adult, 17th May (L. Chappell).

Norfolk Kelling, Titchwell Marsh RSPB and Thornham, adult, 18th May (M. Nash, N. R. Rogers *et al.*).

Somerset Shapwick Heath, adult, 20th April (D. Pointon *et al.*).

Sussex Pulborough Brooks RSPB, adult, 8th May (G. Beck, J. Winder).

(In Europe, small population breeds N Germany & Denmark. Widespread though local Spain, elsewhere colonies small & isolated. To E, breeds discontinuously from Turkey & SW Russia through Kazakhstan, Mongolia & NW China, with isolated population NE China. European population winters coastal W Africa, S to Gulf of Guinea. Asian populations winter Persian Gulf to Indian subcontinent & SE Asia. Other races occur Australia & the Americas.)

Caspian Tern *Hydroprogne caspia* (26, 265, 1)

Norfolk Thornham and Titchwell Marsh RSPB, adult, 17th–18th June, photo (A. Davies *et al.* per birding information services).

(European population breeds Baltic coasts of Estonia, Sweden & Finland to head of Gulf of Bothnia. To E, fragmented populations from Black Sea coast of Ukraine across steppe-lake region of C Asia to NW Mongolia & E China. European birds winter W Africa to Gulf of Guinea, Asian birds winter on coasts to S of breeding range. Other populations occur Australia, S Africa & North America.)

Whiskered Tern *Chlidonias hybrida* (23, 177, 4)

Dorset Swineham Pits, Wareham, adult, 10th April, photo (T. Warrick *et al.*).

Hampshire Stokes Bay, Gosport, adult, 14th April (D. Houghton, J. A. Norton).

Kent Elmley RSPB, adult, 10th April, photo (the late G. W. Allison, R. Clements *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides Loch Fada, Benbecula, 5th–8th April, photo (P. R. Boyer *et al.* per B. Rabbitts).

(Breeds in small, scattered colonies through S & E Europe from Iberia to Poland. Numerous & widespread from N Black Sea E to W Kazakhstan, with Volga/Ural River complex holding most of European population. Winters tropical W & C Africa & from Nile Delta to E Africa. Other populations occur Indian subcontinent, E Asia, S Africa & Australia.)

Black Tern *Chlidonias niger*

North American race, 'American Black Tern' *C. n. surinamensis* (0, 3, 1)

Lincolnshire Covenham Resr, juvenile, 17th September to 7th October, photo (G. P. Catley *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 384; plates 340 & 341); also seen Yorkshire.

Yorkshire Spurn, juvenile, 3rd October (A. A. Hutt, T. McKinney, M. J. Pilsworth *et al.*); also seen Lincolnshire.

Just two years after the long-staying and widely appreciated juvenile in Oxfordshire in autumn 2009, this even more obliging bird arrived for a three-week stay, providing yet another excellent opportunity to study the subtle characteristics of the juvenile plumage of this race. Given good views it seems that identifying a lone juvenile *surinamensis*, like this year's bird, can be relatively straightforward. The Oxfordshire bird was accompanied by juvenile Black and White-winged Black Terns *C. leucopterus*, which highlighted the differences beautifully, but the two previous British records were of lone individuals. Sorting out a distant bird in a wheeling flock of terns is likely to be much more of a challenge.

It is considered that the two sightings here relate to the same individual. In a straight line, it is a relatively short flight across the Humber from Covenham to Spurn, and the bird was certainly absent from Covenham during the morning of 3rd October.

(Race *surinamensis* breeds widely throughout temperate interior Canada & N USA. Migrates through interior & coastal USA to winter Panama to N South America, S to Peru & Venezuela.)



Graham Catley



Graham Catley

340 & 341. Juvenile American Black Tern *Chlidonias niger surinamensis*, Covenham Reservoir, Lincolnshire, September 2012.

Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia* (1, 40, 1)

Moray & Nairn Burghead, 17th November, photo (J. Pott, M. Weedon *et al.*) (plate 342).

While the number of accepted British Brünnich's Guillemot records is just over 40, this still remains an extremely rare bird, even in the Northern Isles, which unsurprisingly lead the way in terms of the regional pattern.

Occasionally all of us have 'Doh!' moments. This year's bird in Burghead harbour was one such,



Jonny Pott

342. Brünnich's Guillemot *Uria lomvia*, Burghead, Moray & Nairn, November 2011.

Europe, breeds on islands off N Siberia into Bering Sea, S to Kuril, Komandorskiye, Aleutian & Pribilof Islands. Also W Alaska & N Canada from Baffin Island to Hudson Bay, Labrador coast & W Greenland. Winters among open leads in pack ice or at sea from Barents Sea S to N Norway, S Greenland, & along Labrador coast S to NE coastal USA. Other populations winter N Pacific, S to N Japan.)

having been seen and photographed by a birding tour group visiting the area as an obligingly close Common Guillemot *U. aalge*. The pictures were thankfully put on the hotel's computer and some weeks later, at Hogmanay no less, Ian Ford, a birdwatching guest of the hotel, saw them and made the reidentification. A Brünnich's Guillemot close inshore in mainland Britain! Sadly, by that stage it was of course long gone.

(Breeds Greenland, Iceland, Svalbard, NE Norway & Novaya Zemlya. Outside

Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis* (2, 7, 1)

Oxfordshire Chipping Norton, juvenile moulting to first-adult *S. o. orientalis*, 12th February to 9th May, photo (S. Akers, I. Lewington, R. Thewlis *et al.*), presumed same as Oxfordshire 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 589–590, plates 74, 101, 187, 313).

Suffolk Barsham, first-winter, 13th–15th April, photo (R. Doe, S. Lester) (plate 343).

Just like the overwintering bird in Oxfordshire (see *Brit. Birds* 104: 589), the Suffolk bird was identified from photographs. The finders had answered the previous year's request from RSPB to report sightings of Turtle Doves *S. turtur* in eastern England to help the research into the species'



Richard Doe

343. First-winter Oriental Turtle Dove *Streptopelia orientalis*, Barsham, Suffolk, April 2011.

decline. Assuming that research was still continuing, they reported the early return of what they assumed to be a Turtle Dove in their garden. They sent the photos to Jenny Dunn at RSPB headquarters who immediately suspected that the bird was in fact an Oriental Turtle Dove and passed the image on to others for confirmation. Although present for three days, it was gone by the time the identification was clinched, denying many frustrated Suffolk birders the opportunity to connect with this county first.

(Breeds from S Urals, E to Japan & S to Tien Shan & Himalayas, C China & Taiwan. Northern populations migratory, wintering SE Iran, Indian subcontinent, & from S China to N Thailand & Indochina.)

Yellow-billed Cuckoo *Coccyzus americanus* (15, 47, 1)

Lancashire & N Merseyside Liverpool, 12th October, died in care, photo (C. Shepherd per Lancashire & N Merseyside Recorder).

Having been found in a Liverpool garden, this sick bird was taken to the PDSA in Huyton where the vet decided that it should be put down. No-one involved had any inkling of the bird's identity at the time, but luckily Claire Shepherd had the presence of mind to take photos and eventually these were shown to John Harris of the RSPB, who identified the bird correctly. Unfortunately, by then the body had been destroyed, so no museum specimen is available.

(Breeds across S Canada from British Columbia to New Brunswick, & through USA S to C Mexico & Greater Antilles. Winters throughout South America to Argentina.)

Snowy Owl *Bubo scandiacus* (c. 200, 209, 0)

Outer Hebrides Brue and Borge, Lewis, adult male, 8th–9th February, photo (J., M. S. & T. S. Scott *et al.*); presumed same Mangersta, Lewis, 4th July, photo (C. & R. Anderson), presumed same as Lewis 2010, see below.

2010 Outer Hebrides Mangersta, Lewis, adult male, 10th June, photo (A. & S. Watt), presumed same, 17th September, photo (A. Seth, P. Stronach); presumed same as Lewis 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 590.

(Breeds N Scandinavia & Iceland, depending on availability of small mammals. Outside Europe, erratic circumpolar breeder across tundra & N islands of Arctic Russia, Siberia, Alaska, Canada & N Greenland. Most disperse S in winter but some resident or nomadic if food available.)

Pallid Swift *Apus pallidus* (0, 74, 5)

Dorset Durlston CP, 4th November, photo (N. Hopper, H. Murray). Ferry Bridge and Langton Herring, juvenile, 11th–12th November, sound recording, found exhausted, photo (M. Cade, Mrs Kerins, M. Langman *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness BO and Dungeness RSPB, 5th–6th April, photo (S. J. Broyd *et al.*).

Norfolk Cromer and Sheringham, 26th–27th October, photo (S. Chidwick, I. Prentice *et al.*).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, 2nd October (J. Leadley, A. Saunders, C. C. Thomas *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout Mediterranean basin from Iberia to Greece, but absent from many regions. Outside Europe, breeds locally from Mauritania & Canary Islands across NW Africa & Middle East to Arabian Peninsula & coastal S Iran. Most winter N African tropics, but some remain S Europe.)

Pacific Swift *Apus pacificus* (0, 5, 1)

Yorkshire Spurn, 9th July (J. Hewitt, T. McEvoy *et al.*).

Fortunately, the recent proposal to split Pacific Swift into four very similar species (Leader 2011) need not concern us. Pacific Swift (*sensu stricto*) is now reduced to two races (nominate *pacificus* and the reinstated *kurodae*) rather than the previous four, but the three remaining taxa are far less migratory and restricted to the Himalayas and southeast Asia. Pacific Swift is an inveterate and prodigious wanderer, breeding in Siberia and travelling widely, occasionally reaching as far as the Pribilof Islands and New Zealand (as does the largely sympatric – and long overdue – White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus*). This is the sixth Pacific Swift for Britain and this species is now very much on the rarity finder's radar. The comment in our 1981 report that 'this first European record was totally unexpected' shows just how much our perception of birds' ability to wander has changed in the intervening 30 years.

All six have turned up between 30th May and 16th July. Such a compulsive wanderer could, of course, turn up anywhere. The first was found on the Leman Bank gas platform in the North Sea, another inland at Daventry Reservoir in Northamptonshire. The east coast, however, seems the best bet, this being the third for Spurn. Nailing the identification of a rare swift on passage, and getting the record accepted, is a considerable feat: all the subtle aspects of size, structure and plumage have to be absorbed in an often brief and disappearing view. Much kudos is due to those at Spurn who have managed to achieve this more than once.

(Breeds W Siberia E to Kamchatka & Japan, S to Vietnam. Northern breeders winter throughout SE Asia & S to Australia.)

European Roller *Coracias garrulus* (196, 113, 2)

Argyll Glen Aros, Mull, 16th June, photo (J. K. Bannon *et al.*).

Suffolk Upper Hollesley Common, adult, 13th June, photo (N. Andrews, N. Thorpe *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 270).

(NW Africa & S Europe from Portugal to Greece, & locally through Balkan countries & E Poland to Estonia & E to Ukraine. More numerous from Turkey & S Russia to S Urals, SW Siberia & C Asia to W China & N Pakistan. Some winter equatorial W Africa but most winter E Africa from Kenya to Zimbabwe.)

Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus* (0, 119, 4)

Cornwall Nanjizal, first-winter, 22nd–29th September, trapped, photo (K. A. Wilson *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary's, 13th–19th September, photo (R. Hathway, K. Webb *et al.* per



Martin Goodey

344. Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Garrison, St Mary's, Scilly, September 2011.

Scilly Recorder) (plate 344); presumed same Porth Hellick area, St Mary's, 21st September, photo (M. R. Davis *et al.*). Carn Friars area, St Mary's, first-winter, 27th October (J. Wilkinson *et al.*).

Outer Hebrides
Brevig, Barra, first-winter, 20th–30th September, trapped, photo (M. Oksien, C. D. Scott *et al.*).

(Breeds throughout S Canada, & USA E of Rocky Mountains. Migrates throughout E USA to winter N South America. Other races resident South America.)

Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus* (0, 11, 1)



Jim Dickson

345. First-winter Brown Shrike *Lanius cristatus*, Balephuil, Tiree, Argyll, October/November 2011.

Argyll Balephuil, Tiree, first-winter, 22nd October to 20th November, photo (J. Bowler *et al.*) (plate 345).

2009 Cornwall Carn Goon, Lizard peninsula, first-winter, 26th–27th September, photo (A. Blunden, I. Maclean *et al.*).

(Breeds Siberia from Ob River basin E to Sea of Okhotsk & Kamchatka, N Japan & throughout much of E China. Nominate *cristatus* winters Indian subcontinent & throughout SE Asia to Philippines, N Borneo & Indonesian islands.)



Hugh Harrop

346. Adult female Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus*, Hillwell, Shetland, October 2012.

Isabelline Shrike *Lanius isabellinus* (0, 80, 9)

Cornwall St Just, first-winter, 25th October, photo (C. C. Robinson).

Hampshire Moonhills Copse, Otterwood, first-winter, 30th October to 2nd November, photo (T. Dempsey, D. & R. P. Reeves *et al.*).

Kent Cliffe, adult male, 16th October, photo (P. Larkin *et al.*).

Norfolk Horsey, first-winter, 23rd–28th October, photo (M. R. Perrow, E. Skeate *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 447).

Pembrokeshire Porth Clais, St David's, first-winter, 28th October to 7th November, photo (J. & M. Best *et al.*).

Shetland Levenwick, Mainland, first-winter, 2nd–5th October, photo (D. Bradnum, H. Vaughan *et al.*). Hillwell and Brake, Mainland, adult female, 6th–29th October, photo (per Shetland Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 385; plate 346). Sandwick, Mainland, first-winter, 1st November, photo (D. P. Hall *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Suffolk Dunwich Heath, first-winter, 14th October, photo (D. Woodward *et al.*).

As mentioned in last year's report, only the subspecies *L. i. phoenicuroides* is currently on the British List. And, also as mentioned last year, it is considered that several of the records accepted here involved the form *L. i. isabellinus*, but questions still remain regarding the characteristics of females and first-winters and work continues to identify a suitable series of records to pass on to BOURC for consideration for the British List. A diagnosable adult male would make the strongest case, but it appears that the bird in Kent may not meet the criteria, highlighting the current difficulty of assigning all individuals of this species to form.

(Breeds widely across arid regions of C Asia from Caspian Sea & W Iran E to Tajikistan, Afghanistan, N Pakistan, S Mongolia & NW China, with isolated subspecies in Zaidam depression, N Tibetan Plateau. Winters NE & E Africa, S Arabian Peninsula, S Iran & NW Indian subcontinent.)

Lesser Grey Shrike *Lanius minor* (21, 162, 2)

Pembrokeshire St Justinian's, St David's, first-summer, 4th–9th July, photo (M. Best *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 271).

Shetland Laxo, Mainland, adult male, 25th–29th September, photo (P-A. Crochet *et al.*).

(Breeds Balkans to E Poland, with small numbers W through N Mediterranean to S France & NE Spain. To E, breeds locally from Black Sea coasts, across S Russia & Kazakhstan to NW China & SW Siberia. Migrates through E Africa to winter S Africa, from Namibia to S Mozambique & N South Africa.)

Southern Grey Shrike *Lanius meridionalis* (0, 23, 1)

Shropshire Wall Farm, Kynnersley, first-winter *L. m. pallidirostris*, 28th October to 9th November, photo (A. Latham *et al.*).

(Central Asian race *pallidirostris* breeds C Asia from lower Volga E to S Mongolia & extreme NW China, S to N Iran & N Pakistan. Winters to S & W of breeding range from Sudan, N Ethiopia & Somalia through Arabian Peninsula to W Iran.)

Penduline Tit *Remiz pendulinus* (0, 250, 7)

Kent Dungeness RSPB, adult male, 17th February to 21st March, ringed, photo (D. Walker *et al.*); presumed same 15th October to 28th December, ringed, photo (D. Walker *et al.*); presumed same as one of Dungeness 2010, *Brit. Birds* 104: 595.

Lancashire & N Merseyside Leighton Moss RSPB, male, 21st November, trapped (A. Cadman, J. Wilson).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, three, at least one male in song, 14th–15th March, one ringed, photo (D. Fairhurst *et al.*); presumed same Dingle Marshes RSPB, two, males, 24th March (P. Green).

Sussex Pett Level, first-winter, 10th November, trapped, photo (Rye Bay Ringing Group).

Yorkshire Winterset Resr, two, 6th November, photo (P. Meredith, A. & P. Smith).

2010 Hampshire Titchfield Haven, two, first-winters, 12th October (B. Duffin *et al.*).

1997 Greater London Brent Resr, three, adult and two first-winters, 2nd November (J-P. Charteris, A. Self, A. G. Verrall *et al.*).

The bird in Sussex had originally been ringed at Sandouville, Seine-Maritime, France, on 17th October 2011, making this the fifth recorded movement of a ringed Penduline Tit between Britain and continental Europe and the third involving a bird at Pett Level – one ringed there in October 1988 was controlled in south-central Sweden in May 1989, while another ringed in southern Sweden in July 1997 was controlled at Pett Level in October 1997. Two other overseas movements are from Orfordness, Suffolk (November 2003) to southern France (November 2004), and the Netherlands (July 2003) to Slapton Ley, Devon (January 2004). In addition, the male at Dungeness in early 2011 had been ringed at Pett Level in 2009, and was also present at Dungeness in late winter 2010; while one of the birds at Minsmere in March 2011 was wearing what appeared to be a Dutch ring.

With three movements involving birds found during the breeding season in southern Sweden and the Netherlands, and two autumn/winter movements between southern England and France, a picture of where our Penduline Tits originate is beginning to emerge. The limited data available suggests that southern and southeast England (and northern France) fall within the regular wintering range of a north European breeding population of Penduline Tits, which then head to their breeding grounds in early spring, some of them via East Anglia. The numbers reaching Britain are erratic – between two and 20 birds in recent years – so southern Britain probably lies at the periphery of the winter range.

(Widely but locally distributed throughout C & E Europe, from Denmark, Germany & Italy NE to C Sweden & Estonia. Absent from much of NW Europe but locally numerous Spain. To E, breeds from S Russia to Volga River. Largely resident or dispersive Europe. Other races, sometimes regarded as separate species, occur C Asia & from S Siberia to NE China, & winter NW Indian subcontinent, S China & S Japan.)

Calandra Lark *Melanocorypha calandra* (0, 15, 1)

Lincolnshire Gibraltar Point, 11th May (T. Bagworth, K. M. Wilson).

This species is notorious for short stays and fly-over records, and has a predilection for islands. The record from 2011 was thus a break from tradition, in that it was on the mainland (and it was probably seen the previous day too). But it was less than co-operative and seen properly by only two observers.

Since the first, at Portland, Dorset, in 1961, there have been another 15 records, with Fair Isle accounting for no fewer than four of them. Single records in the 1960s, 70s and 80s preceded six in the 90s and another half-dozen in the first decade of the present century – a period when the

Calandra Lark's 'mythical' crown began to slip a little. All bar two records have been in April and May with single entries for September and October. Is the recent increase a reflection of better observer coverage or an increasing population (this species breeds commonly in Spain but also in eastern Europe and central Asia)? It is now over 30 years since the last Bimaculated Lark *M. bimaculata*, which remains the main confusion species, an identification headache that many British birders would give their right arm for...

(Breeds on steppe grasslands from Iberia & Morocco E throughout much of Mediterranean basin, also Ukraine, Turkey & SW Russia to Kazakhstan, NW China & Afghanistan. European & S Asian populations resident or nomadic, while N Asian populations disperse S of breeding range, wintering S to Persian Gulf coast of Iran.)

Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus*

Northern race, 'Northern Long-tailed Tit' *A. c. caudatus* (–, [12], 12)

Kent Dymchurch, five, 7th January to 8th March, photo (H. & T. Hammond, O. J. Leyshon *et al.*). Kingsdown, two, 16th January to 5th February, photo (N. Jarman *et al.*). North Foreland, four, 13th–16th March, photo (B. Hunt *et al.*) (plate 347).

Suffolk Goose Hill, Leiston, 22nd March (T. Hodge).

(N & E Europe, & N Asia E through Siberia & N Mongolia to Kamchatka, Hokkaido & NE China. Largely resident or dispersive outside the breeding season.)



Peter Solly

347. Northern Long-tailed Tit *Aegithalos caudatus caudatus*, Dymchurch, Kent, February 2011.

Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus* (0, 1, 1)

Hertfordshire Hilfield Park Resr, first-winter, 30th October, trapped, photo (J. Fearnside *et al.*) (plate 348).

This bird was trapped, ringed and released as a Yellow-browed Warbler *P. inornatus* but, with the benefit of photographs and references, the enormity of its true identity was realised fairly quickly. The ringers and birders present that morning at a Hertfordshire site within 30 km of central London can certainly be forgiven for not having this species on their radar. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the bird disappeared quickly into the vast areas of cover around Hilfield and was not seen again.

There are four other recent European records: Jaeren, Norway, on 30th September 2002; Kokkola, Finland, on 23rd October 2004; Katwijk aan Zee, the Netherlands, on 5th October 2007; and, of course, Trow Quarry, Co. Durham, on 22nd October 2009. The first for the Western Palearctic was on Helgoland on 4th October 1843 – now part of Germany, although in 1843 Helgoland was British...



348. First-winter Eastern Crowned Warbler *Phylloscopus coronatus*, Hilfield Park Reservoir, Hertfordshire, October 2011.

Eastern Crowned Warbler is one of the earliest of the east Asian passerine migrants, with passage in southern China peaking in the first three weeks of September, several weeks earlier than other sympatric Asian *Phylloscopus* warblers. In Hong Kong, for example, Yellow-browed and Dusky Warblers *P. fuscatus* occur in relatively small numbers in September and early October, but

increase rapidly in November, while the passage of Pallas's Leaf *P. proregulus* and Radde's Warblers *P. schwarzi* is apparent only from late October onwards (Carey *et al.* 2001). While Eastern Crowned has a much smaller breeding range, well to the east of the westernmost ranges of those four more regular *Phylloscopus* species in Britain, the coincidence in the timing here is interesting as it isn't reflected on passage in Asia. Perhaps some of those September and early October Yellow-broweds deserve a second look?

(Breeds SE Transbaikalia & E to mouth of Amur River, NE China, Korean Peninsula, Japan, with isolated population W Sichuan Province, China. Winters SE Asia from Vietnam & Thailand, S through Malay Peninsula to Sumatra & Java.)

Arctic Warbler *Phylloscopus borealis* (11, 300, 8)

Fair Isle Vaadal, first-winter, 23rd–24th August, trapped, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Norfolk Burnham Overy Dunes, 24th September, photo (A. Griffiths, E. T. Myers, R. Ward *et al.*).

Shetland Grutness, Mainland, 24th–26th August, photo (R. M. Fray *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 25th

August (M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason). Tresta, Fetlar, first-winter, 4th September, photo

(B. H. Thomason). Hoswick, Mainland, 7th–9th September, photo (C. M. & E. Beach *et al.*). The

Manse, Foula, first-winter, 16th September, photo (G. C. Taylor *et al.*). Sandwick, Mainland, first-

winter, 17th–18th September, photo (P. M. Ellis, G. A. Tyler *et al.*).

(Breeds locally N Scandinavia, becoming widespread across N Russia E to extreme NE Siberia, S to Baikal region, Ussuriland & NE China. Winters throughout SE Asia to Java, Philippines & Sulawesi.)

Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* (0, 107, 14)

Cleveland South Gare, Redcar, 11th–12th November, photo (D. J. Britton, A. Kraus, G. N. Megson *et al.*) (plate 349).

Dorset Littlesea Wood, Wyke Regis, 23rd November into 2012, sound recording, trapped, photo (F. Alway, M. Cade, I. Dodd *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness, 4th–7th December, photo (W. R. Hayward *et al.*).

Norfolk Trimingham, 9th–10th November, photo (P. J. Heath *et al.*). Holme, 23rd November (S. Barker, S. Yardy); presumed same 28th November, trapped, photo (G. Elton *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Foveran, 12th–19th November, sound recording, photo (C. N. Gibbins, H. E. Maggs *et al.*).

Northumberland Holy Island, 15th November (M. Carr).

Shetland Kergord, Mainland, 8th–9th November, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*). Trondra, 13th–19th

November (P. M. Ellis, G. & J. D. Okill *et al.*). Symbister, Whalsay, 15th–30th November, photo (J. L.

Irvine *et al.*). Gulberwick, Mainland, 15th–19th November (D. Coutts, A. Ockendon *et al.*). Grut-

ness, Mainland, 15th–20th November, photo (G. F. Bell *et al.* per Shetland Recorder).

Suffolk Lowestoft, 15th–19th November, photo (S. Jones *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder). Lowestoft,

19th–23rd November, photo (S. Jones *et al.* per Suffolk Recorder).



Martyn Sidwell

349. Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei*, South Gare, Cleveland, November 2011.

The 14 individuals in 2011 (exceeded only by 28 in 2003) continue the pattern of an increasing number of records (fig. 3). This prompts the usual debate: has the species shown a genuine increase or is this trend the product of greater observer awareness? The vastly increased familiarity of many observers with the (variety of) calls of Hume's Warbler means that we are now receiving submissions where the bird was identified on call even before it was seen. This growing awareness of vocalisations may well mean that the increase in records is set to continue, in the short term at least. The records from Shetland/Fair Isle give us a clue that the pattern is more complex than simple year-on-year growth, however. The first records there were in 2003 (three), with another three in 2008 and five in 2011 – in other words, a series of 'influx years' are a key component in the overall increase. Hume's Warbler remains genuinely rare in spring although it overwinters not infrequently; and it is still a great bird for self-find listers.

(Breeds Altai Mountains to W Mongolia, S through Tien Shan & Pamirs to NE Afghanistan, NW Himalayas & mountains of NW China. Winters S Afghanistan to N India, E to W Bengal. Another race breeds C China from Hebei to S Yunnan, W to lower slopes of Tibetan Plateau.)

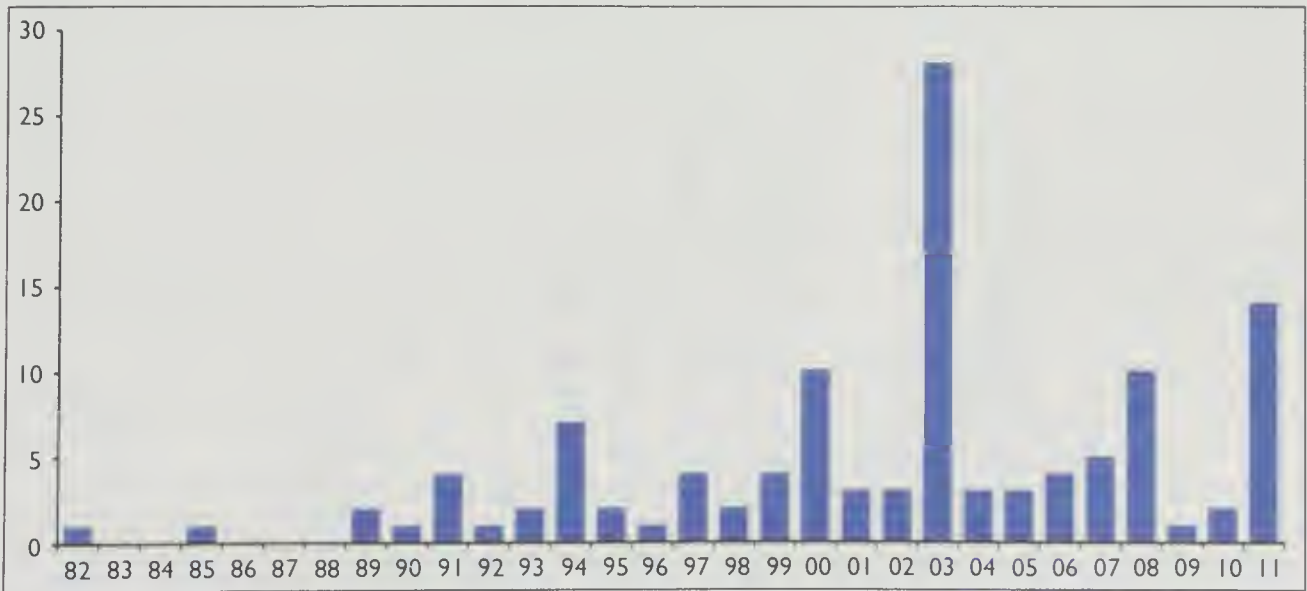


Fig. 3. Records of Hume's Warbler *Phylloscopus humei* in Britain in the 30-year period 1982–2011; prior to 1982, there were just three British records, in 1966, 1967 and 1970.

Western Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli* (1, 96, 8)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey Island, first-winter, 1st September, trapped, photo (S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).
Derbyshire Arnfield Resr, Tintwistle, male in song, 2nd–28th July, photo (M. Doxon, P. Greenall *et al.*).

Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary's, 18th–21st August, photo (K. Webb *et al.*).

Kent Dungeness BO, first-winter, 24th August, trapped, photo (D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk Cromer, 26th–28th August, photo (S. J. White *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire St David's Head, 3rd October (M. Young-Powell *et al.*).

Shetland Gulberwick, Mainland, first-winter, 9th–11th August, photo (L. Dalziel, R. A. Haywood, A. Ockendon *et al.*). Houbie, Fetlar, first-winter, 12th September, photo (B. H. Thomason).

(Breeds SW Europe from Iberia to N France, S Germany, Italy, Austria, & locally in mountains of N Africa. Winters along S edge of Sahara, from Senegal & S Mauritania to N Cameroon.)

Western Bonelli's/Eastern Bonelli's Warbler *Phylloscopus bonelli/orientalis* (0, 75, 1)

Cornwall Polgigga, 20th–23rd August, photo (M. Warren *et al.* per Cornwall Recorder).

This bird was submitted as Western Bonelli's and that is almost certainly what it was. Calls remain the only known diagnostic feature for separating these two extremely similar species in the field, and we urge finders of Bonelli's warblers to make a sound recording of the call wherever possible – anything, no matter how basic, using a mobile phone or an iPod for example, is enormously helpful for assessment. Failing this, finders should at least describe the call accurately: to say simply that 'it called like a Western' is not quite enough...

(Western: see above. Eastern: breeding confined to E Mediterranean, from Bosnia-Herzegovina to S Bulgaria & Greece, east to S Turkey. Winters in NE Africa, from Sudan to Ethiopia.)

Iberian Chiffchaff *Phylloscopus ibericus* (0, 25, 3)

Cornwall Rame Head, male in song, 11th–15th May, sound recording, photo (D. Clegg, L. A. C. Truscott *et al.*).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Warbreck, Blackpool, male in song, 3rd–5th May, sound recording, photo (D. J. McGrath *et al.*).

Norfolk Titchwell Marsh RSPB, male in song, 13th–14th April, sound recording, photo (per Norfolk Recorder).

(Breeds locally French Pyrenees & S throughout W Iberia. N African range restricted to NW Morocco & N Algeria to NW Tunisia. Wintering range poorly known.)

Spectacled Warbler *Sylvia conspicillata* (0, 5, 2)

Hampshire Needs Ore Point, adult male, 29th–30th October, photo (P. J. Hack, N. R. Jones *et al.*).

Norfolk Scolt Head, male in song, 6th May, photo (N. M. Lawton *et al.*).

(Breeds Canary Islands, NW Africa & W Mediterranean N through Spain to S France, also Sicily, Sardinia, Cyprus, Israel & W Jordan. Some populations resident, others migrate to winter N Africa, mostly N of Sahara.)

Subalpine Warbler *Sylvia cantillans*

Southeast European race, 'Eastern Subalpine Warbler' *S. c. albistriata* (0, [36], 5)

Caernarfonshire Bardsey, male, 20th April, photo (B. Porter, S. Stansfield *et al.*).

Fair Isle Dronger and Observatory, first-summer male, 29th April to 4th June, trapped, photo (W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby *et al.*).

Norfolk Blakeney Point, male, 30th April, photo (E. Stubbings *et al.*).

Shetland Burrafirth, Unst, adult male, 17th April, found dead, photo (A. & R. Foyster *et al.*).

Kergord, Mainland, first-summer male, 29th May to 7th June (G. Dutson *et al.*).

2010 Caernarfonshire Bardsey, first-summer male in song, 23rd–30th May, trapped, photo (S. Hinde, S. D. Stansfield *et al.*).

2010 Shetland Trondra, male, 2nd–3rd May, photo (G. & J. D. Okill).

2009 Dorset Portland Bill, male, 9th May, photo (R. A. Ford *et al.*).

2009 Orkney Rue, North Ronaldsay, first-summer male, 16th–18th May, photo (R. J. Butcher *et al.*).

2008 Dorset Portland, male, 26th June, sound recording, photo (S. & V. Ashby, G. Walbridge *et al.*).

2006 Shetland Sumburgh Head, Mainland, first-summer male, 7th May, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*). Vidlin, Mainland, first-summer male, 8th May, photo (M. S. Chapman *et al.*).

This is a bird of the modern era where the identification criteria separating the three core taxa (nominate *cantillans*, *S. c. moltoni* and *S. c. albistriata*) have emerged only recently and are still being digested by the birding community. While BBRC is keen to receive records, it is well aware that knowledge of the status of Eastern Subalpine Warbler is still unfolding. It may turn out to be a relatively frequent visitor, perhaps even as regular as Western Subalpine Warbler *S. c. cantillans*, which is no longer considered by BBRC. The statistics given above now include all previously published records that were noted as ‘probably *albistriata*’ or ‘showing characteristics of *albistriata*’.

Currently, we have assumed that only males are diagnosable and the records above involve only recently submitted claims; there may be a number of other good candidates in the BBRC archives and this is under investigation. Careful observation of the underpart tones (photographs often portray the subtle colours incorrectly), the shape and extent of the white malar stripe and a recording of any call notes are usually sufficient to identify males to race. Biometric and genetic data may also provide valuable evidence.

(Race *albistriata* breeds SE Europe from Slovenia & Croatia S to Greece, Aegean Islands, Crete & W Turkey. Migrates through Middle East to winter along S edge of Sahara S to Sudan.)

Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* (0, 75, 2)

Cornwall Nanjizal, male, 24th April (K. A. Wilson).

Devon Orcombe Point, Exmouth, male, 20th April, photo (M. Knott *et al.*).

After a marked increase in the late twentieth century (this species missed only one year between 1990 and 2005; fig. 4), records have been distinctly less frequent in recent years and these two are the first since 2008. The increase in occurrences during the 1980s and 90s has been linked to a northward expansion of the breeding range in parts of Mediterranean Europe, including Italy, northwest Spain and southern France (Rogers *et al.* 2004; Slack 2009), and although population trends are not known for all European countries, it is thought to be stable or increasing (e.g. BirdLife International 2004). Consequently, the reasons for the recent dearth of records in Britain are unclear.

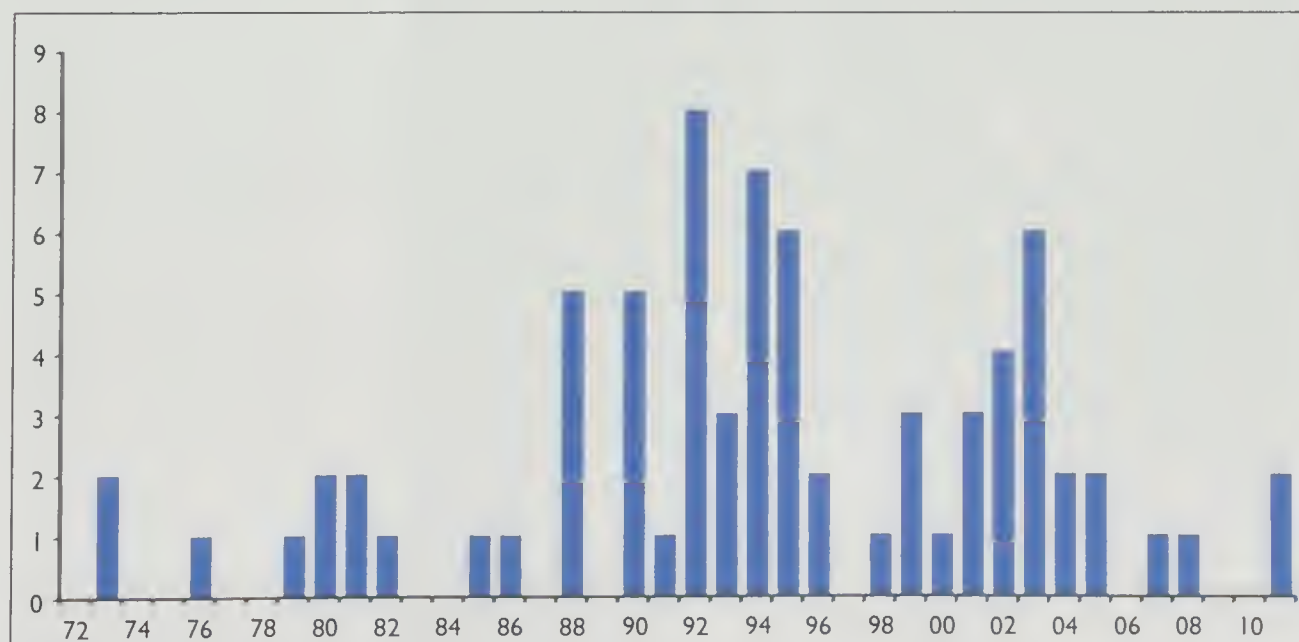


Fig. 4. Records of Sardinian Warbler *Sylvia melanocephala* in Britain in the 40-year period 1972–2011; prior to 1972, there were just three British records, in 1955, 1967 and 1968.

Southwest Britain accounts for almost a third of all records and the two in 2011 represent the fifth for Devon and seventh for Cornwall. East Anglia, with 15 records (19%), is the region in second place (and the 13 records for Norfolk make this the top county by some margin), followed by Scotland (17%), the southeast (16%) and the northeast (10%). Two Welsh records and two in the northwest complete the picture. Just over two-thirds of arrivals have been in spring, in March–June. Sardinian Warbler is a skulker of the highest order, so it is unsurprising that the more eye-catching and vocal males account for at least 69% of the records.

(Largely resident or dispersive throughout Mediterranean basin, from NW Africa & Iberia to S France, N Italy & E to W Turkey & Israel. Some winter N Africa from Sahara S to Mauritania & S Libya.)

Pallas's Grasshopper Warbler *Locustella certhiola* (1, 45, 1)

Fair Isle Gilsetter, juvenile, 30th September, photo (I. Cowgill, P. A. Jeffery, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

(Breeds Siberia from Irtysh River E to Yakutia & Sea of Okhotsk, & SW Siberia & NE Kazakhstan through Mongolia to Ussuriland & N & NE China. Winters Sri Lanka & NE India to S China, & S throughout SE Asia.)

Lanceolated Warbler *Locustella lanceolata* (7, 123, 1)

Fair Isle Field, juvenile, 13th October, photo (P. Cook, W. T. S. Miles *et al.*); presumed same Pund, 14th October, found dead, photo (M. T. Breaks *et al.*).

(Singing males regular SE Finland. To E, discontinuously from C Urals E to Kamchatka, Kuril Islands, Hokkaido & NE China. Winters Indian subcontinent, from Nepal E through NE India to SE Asia & Philippines.)

River Warbler *Locustella fluviatilis* (0, 40, 0)

2009 Fair Isle Lower Stoneybrek, 5th–12th October, photo (S. J. Davies, D. N. Shaw *et al.*).

This record provided some confusion for observers and Committee members alike. A wet and bedraggled *Locustella*, photographed on Fair Isle on 4th October, was considered by some observers to have been this bird, but it was submitted by at least one other observer as a Savi's Warbler *L. luscinioides*. Further photographs of the River Warbler, appearing even more bedraggled, were submitted from the end of its stay. Ultimately none of the photographic evidence was conclusive, but the written descriptions of the bird convinced most (although not all) voting members that the identification had been established correctly. This record reinforces the point that photographic evidence alone is not always sufficient to resolve rarity identification and supporting descriptions are an essential component in many claims.

(Breeds C & E Europe from Germany to C Finland & Croatia, E through Ukraine & C Russia to W Siberia. Migrates through Middle East & NE Africa to winter E Africa.)

Savi's Warbler *Locustella luscinioides* (–, 596, 7)

Devon Slapton Ley, male in song, 24th–30th April, trapped, photo (J. R. Read, N. C. Ward *et al.*); also seen Dorset.

Dorset Lodmoor RSPB, male in song, 11th May to 1st June, sound recording, photo (N. Fowler *et al.*); also seen Devon.

Essex Canvey Wick, male in song, 21st April, photo (T. Bourne *et al.*).

Leicestershire & Rutland Rutland Water, male in song, 6th June (R. G. Bayldon, M. G. Berriman, T. Mackrill *et al.*).

Norfolk Hickling Broad, male in song, 18th–21st July (T. E. Allwood, M. Crossfield, A. J. Kane *et al.*); presumed same 24th–28th July, sound recording (observers' names withheld).

Shetland Out Skerries, 27th May (S. Dunstan).

Sussex Pett Level, male in song, 27th May to 24th June, sound recording (I. Hunter *et al.*).

Yorkshire Sammy's Point, Easington, male in song, 17th April, photo (J. Carr *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds Iberia N to S Scandinavia, & E through E Europe, Russia & Ukraine to Black Sea coasts, & winters W Africa from Senegal to N Nigeria. Eastern race *fusca* breeds C Asia to NW China & W Mongolia, & winters NE Africa.)

Eastern Olivaceous Warbler *Iduna pallida* (0, 16, 1)

Fair Isle Taft and Schoolton, first-winter, 2nd–3rd September, photo (D. Parnaby *et al.*).

(Race *elaieca* breeds Balkans & Greece E to Turkey, S Caucasus, S Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Iraq, Iran & N Afghanistan. Migrates through Middle East to winter E Africa. Other races breed North Africa, some wintering to S of breeding range.)

Booted Warbler *Iduna caligata* (1, 122, 5)

Fair Isle Burkle and Schoolton, first-winter, 26th August, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

Shetland Skaw, Unst, first-winter, 23rd–28th August, photo (R. Brookes, M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason). Grutness, Mainland, 24th–26th August, photo (G. F. Bell, P. M. Ellis, R. M. Fray *et al.*).

Ham, Foula, 14th September, photo (D. & G. Atherton).

Suffolk Landguard, first-winter, 16th October, trapped, photo (P. J. Holmes *et al.*).

(Breeds E Finland, E to C Russia & W Siberia to Yenisey valley, C & N Kazakhstan to W Mongolia & W Xinjiang province, China. Winters N & peninsular India, S to Karnataka.)

Paddyfield Warbler *Acrocephalus agricola* (1, 81, 1)

Dorset Cuttleaves Cove, Chickerell, adult, 21st July, trapped, photo (F. Alway, M. Cade, I. Dodd).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from N Bulgaria & Danube delta E to Ukraine. To E, breeds widely across steppes of S Russia & SW Siberia, Kazakhstan, NW China & W Mongolia, S to Uzbekistan & N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* (9, 107, 13)

Argyll Balephuill, Tiree, first-winter, 19th–26th September, photo (J. Bowler *et al.*).

Cheshire & Wirral Hilbre, 5th June, trapped, photo (S. R. & T. G. Williams *et al.*).

Dorset Portland, first-winter, 27th September, trapped, photo (M. Cade, M. Lanaway *et al.*).

Fair Isle Plantation, 10th June, trapped, photo (W. T. S. Miles, J. Moss, J. Nilsson *et al.*). Observatory, first-winter, 19th September, trapped, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). South Haven, first-winter, 1st October, trapped, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Easter Lothar, first-winter, 14th October, trapped, photo (J. Moss *et al.*).

Isle of Man Calf of Man, adult, 8th June, trapped, photo (S. J. Davies, N. O'Hanlon).

Isles of Scilly Middle Town, St Martin's, first-winter, 16th October, photo (A. Coath, A. D. Jordan, R. Powell) (plate 350).

Orkney Holland House,



350. First-winter Blyth's Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus dumetorum* Middle Town, St Martin's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011.

Andy Jordan

North Ronaldsay, male in song, 7th June, trapped, photo (P. A. Brown, R. J. Else, R. Ratcliffe *et al.*).
Holland House, North Ronaldsay, 23rd June, trapped, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).
Shetland Bixter, Mainland, first-winter, 19th–20th September, photo (R. M. Tallack).
Sussex Pett Level, 10th June, trapped, photo (I. & S. Hunter *et al.*).
2010 Shetland Wester Quarff, Mainland, first-winter, 27th–28th September (A. G. Duff, M. J. & P. A. Lawson).

(Breeds S Finland, Baltic countries & European Russia E through C Siberia to Lake Baikal & upper Lena River, & S through W Mongolia & NW China, Kazakhstan & Tajikistan to N Pakistan. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent S to Sri Lanka & E to NW Burma.)

Great Reed Warbler *Acrocephalus arundinaceus* (7, 238, 5)

Cornwall Nanjizal, 10th–17th April, trapped, photo (K. A. Wilson *et al.*).
Isles of Scilly Porth Hellick, St Mary's, adult, 1st November, trapped, photo (J. Askins, J. Pearson *et al.*).
Shetland Vidlin, Mainland, male in song, 7th June, sound recording (P. V. Harvey, M. J. & R. M. Tallack *et al.*). Maywick, Mainland, male in song, 12th June, sound recording (H. R. & M. P. Harrop).
Somerset King's Sedgemoor, male in song, 29th May, photo (D. J. Chown *et al.*).
1961 Dorset Burton Mere, male in song, 20th May, sound recording (J. Newsome, P. J. Sellar *et al.* per M. J. Morse).

The 1961 record merits some explanation. Mike Morse was researching for an article on BBRC rarities on his local patch, an area of the Dorset coast that includes Burton Mere. A record of Great Reed Warbler in 1961 was listed in local avifauna lists but Mike discovered that it had never been submitted formally to BBRC. The *Proceedings of the Dorset Natural History & Archaeological Society* revealed the initials J. N. and P. J. S. against the record, and Martin Cade suggested that the latter was Pat Sellar, currently President of the International Bioacoustics Council. When tracked down, Pat Sellar not only remembered the bird well but was even able to provide a recording of its song, which had originally been played by James Fisher as part of a BBC radio series *The Patient Listeners*. So, good provenance, a 'sound' identification (pun intended) and one more record now in the archive. Well done, Mike!

(Breeds throughout much of continental Europe from Iberia to Greece, N to S Sweden & S Finland, & E across S Russia, Turkey & Caucasus to W Siberia. C Asian race *zarudnyi* breeds from Volga to NW China & W Mongolia. Winters throughout C & S Africa.)

Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla* (0, 25, 1)

Suffolk Landguard, 24th March to 6th April, trapped, photo (N. Odin, O. R. Slessor *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 147; plate 351).

With many British rarities it is interesting to set their occurrence patterns into a wider European perspective, but some species that are still major rarities in Britain become rather common just across the English Channel (or the North Sea). The Short-toed Treecreeper breeds commonly from Spain to Germany, yet this generally highly sedentary species is particularly averse to sea crossings. Certainly, those that make it across the Channel don't travel far: no fewer than 20 of the 26 British records have come from Kent. Two each in Essex and Dorset and one each from Suffolk and Yorkshire make up the balance. Eleven of the 26 turned up between March and May, with another 13 between September and November.

Most of the Kent birds were trapped, which simplifies the identification of this tricky species. This is similar to the situation in Sweden, where 22 of the 31 records are of birds trapped at Falsterbo – one of which had been ringed in Denmark. The short crossing from Denmark to Sweden is still a formidable barrier to this species. See: www.sofnet.org/sveriges-ornitologiska-forening/raritetskatalogen/tradkrypare,-tornskator-krakfaglar/tradgardstradkrypare/

The best feature to separate this species from Eurasian Treecreeper *C. familiaris* is the call – and it can't be too long before a diligent inland patch worker hears a Short-toed in their local

wood. Careful observation and good photographs and field notes should help with a non-trapped bird, to establish the subtle differences in wing pattern, bill colour and underparts colour.

The Landguard Point bird was trapped several times during its stay, and Landguard's warden Nigel Odin noted that its weight increased from a low of 7.6 g early on 25th March to 9.2 g on the afternoon of 6th April. Over the same period the bird's fat score increased from 0 to 3 with the pectoral muscle score remaining the same throughout. The weights are within the range of data published in *BWP* but there appear to be no published data on weight gain

or an increase in the fat score of an individual migrant of this species.

(Mostly resident S Spain N to Denmark & E to Poland, W Ukraine & Greece. Elsewhere, resident in mountains of N Africa, W Turkey & W Caucasus.)

Dipper *Cinclus cinclus*

North European race, 'Black-bellied Dipper' *C. c. cinclus* (–, [7], 1)

Fair Isle Gilly Burn and Hjukni Geo, 26th April (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

1997 Leicestershire & Rutland Toilethorpe Mill, Ryhall, first-winter, 21st–23rd February, photo (A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*).

1990 Leicestershire & Rutland River Welland near Tinwell, 2nd and 15th December (A. H. J. Harrop *et al.*).

1976 Norfolk Hempstead Mill, first-winter, 2nd December 1975 to 17th February, trapped, photo (M. Taylor *et al.*).

(Breeds Scandinavia, Baltic countries & W Russia. Outside the breeding season, resident or dispersive to S & W of breeding range.)

Swainson's Thrush *Catharus ustulatus* (0, 27, 2)

Orkney Kirbuster, Mainland, first-winter, 21st October, photo (A. & N. Watts).

Shetland Dalsetter, Mainland, 21st–23rd September, photo (M. Mellor *et al.*).

The bird in Orkney was seen and photographed by two visitors, who showed their photographs to local birder Alan Leitch some five days after the event. He identified the bird and went to the site first thing the next morning but, unsurprisingly, there was no sign of it.

(Breeds S Alaska & Canada E to S Labrador & Newfoundland, S to N California, New Mexico, Great Lakes & West Virginia. Migrates across E USA to winter from Mexico S to NW Argentina.)



Lee Woods

351. Short-toed Treecreeper *Certhia brachydactyla*, Landguard, Suffolk, March 2011.

Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* (0, 51, 1)

Shetland Tresta, Fetlar, first-winter, 23rd–24th September, photo (D. Bradnum, M. Smith, H. Vaughan *et al.*).

(Breeds extreme NE Siberia, & E through Alaska & N Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland. Migrates across E USA to winter N South America.)

Veery *Catharus fuscescens* (0, 9, 1)



Dennis Morrison

Highland Galanach Farm, Muck, first-winter, 16th–24th November, photo (D. Barnden *et al.*) (plate 352).

The fifth record in the last ten years – and all five have appeared on Scottish islands.

(Breeds Canada from S British Columbia E to Newfoundland, S through USA E of Rocky Mountains to N Arizona & Georgia. Winters N South America from Colombia to NW Brazil.)

352. First-winter Veery *Catharus fuscescens*, Muck, Highland, November 2011.

Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane* (0, 2, 1)

Shetland Ham, Foula, first-winter female, 1st October, found dead, photo (K. B. Shepherd, M. Taylor, N. D. & P. Wright *et al.*).

One of the (mightily impressive) cast of rare chats that appeared in 2011, but a frustrating one. Since it was on Foula, it would hardly have been available to the masses, even had it stayed for several days, but (like last year's Rufous-tailed Robin on North Ronaldsay, Orkney) this bird was already dead when found, a casualty of one of the island cats.

The specimen has since been placed in the National Museums Scotland, in Edinburgh. The bird was thought to be a first-winter female when examined initially, because of the restricted blue in the plumage, which wasn't obvious at certain angles. However, specimens in the NHM, Tring, showed that some first-winter males may also have very limited blue, so the sex was later confirmed by DNA analysis (McGowan 2012).

Only four other Siberian Blue Robins have been seen in Europe. A first-winter female was trapped on Sark, in the Channel Islands, on 27th October 1975 and this species consequently became much anticipated as a potential addition to the British List. Another first-winter was trapped at the Ebro Delta in Spain on 18th October 2000, just a few days before the first for Britain.

Both previous British records involved elusive birds that were not widely twitched. The first was found in the dunes at Minsmere, Suffolk, on 23rd October 2000; the second turned up on North Ronaldsay on 2nd October 2001. The arrival of these two individuals in Britain (and another in Spain) in the space of twelve months had observers hoping that a genuinely twitchable bird was just a matter of time. A decade on, and all that can really be said for the sorry tale of the 2011 bird is that it is a reminder that there is always a chance of being the lucky person who finds the next one of these little skulkers – hopefully one that is both alive and accessible.

(Breeds S Siberia from Russian Altai E to Sakhalin & S to N Mongolia, NE China & N Japan. Winters throughout SE Asia.)

Rufous-tailed Robin *Larvivora sibilans* (0, 2, 1)

Norfolk Warham Greens, 14th October, photo (R. Martin, J. R. McCallum *et al.*) (plates 353 & 354).

Although present for just a single afternoon, the Norfolk Rufous-tailed Robin adds weight to the growing body of evidence that this species is becoming a more regular European vagrant. The first for Britain was on Fair Isle as recently as 23rd October 2004 (*Brit. Birds* 99: 236–241), and the second for the Western Palearctic followed just over a year later, when an unseasonable individual was seen at a sewage-farm in eastern Poland on 30th–31st December 2005. The next to reach Europe was unfortunately found freshly dead on North Ronaldsay on the morning of 2nd October 2010. The Norfolk bird was thus not only the fourth record for Europe, but the fourth in just seven years! In short, Rufous-tailed Robin is fast becoming the new Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* (there have been eight British records of the latter since the first in 1975, four of which have occurred during the same time period as the four Rufous-tailed Robins). These two species, together with Siberian Blue Robin *Larvivora cyane* (three British and five European records), comprise a trio that represents something of a holy grail in modern birding, the three most sought-after Sibes.

Rufous-tailed Robin is a skulking species by nature, but in a vagrant situation just the glimpse of a short, rufous tail or a bold buff eye-ring should set alarm bells ringing. Better views reveal a bird that recalls a diminutive *Catharus* thrush, but with mottling rather than spotting on the breast and long pink legs. The finder of the Norfolk bird soon realised that this species can easily 'go missing' in just a single hedgerow, but there turned out to be a simple reason for this: the bird, once it knew it had been spotted, habitually flew up from the ground to an elevated perch and instantly froze. This proved to be a remarkably effective ploy, as the lack of movement rendered the bird virtually invisible to the gaze of any onlooker. Of course, a lost vagrant finding itself in sparse cover may not be able to indulge in such sport, and the next Rufous-tailed Robin to arrive in Britain will hopefully perform dutifully to a large and appreciative crowd. And, like the bird in Poland, it may even stick around for a second day...

(Breeds S Siberia from Altai Mountains & upper Yenisey River, E to Sakhalin & S Sea of Okhotsk, & S to mountains of NE China. Winters China S of Yangtze River, to N Indochina & Thailand.)



Rob Martin



Rob Martin

353 & 354. Rufous-tailed Robin *Larvivora sibilans*, Warham Greens, Norfolk, October 2011.

Mike Lawrence



355. First-summer female White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis*, Hartlepool Headland, Cleveland, June 2011.

White-throated Robin *Irania gutturalis* (0, 2, 1)

Cleveland Hartlepool Headland, first-summer female, 6th–10th June, trapped, photo (C. Brown, T. Francis, M. Gee *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 223; plate 355).

The discovery of this most sought-after chat in a mist-net at Hartlepool Headland triggered what was perhaps the biggest twitch in 2011. After being released it remained within the confines of the limited suitable cover – the famous doctor’s garden and the adjacent bowling green – for five days. Following a male on the Calf of Man on 22nd June 1983 and a female on Skokholm, Pembrokeshire, on 27th–30th May 1990, this lingering and often showy bird, at an easily accessible mainland site, was predictably popular and was, for many, the highlight of the year.

The fact that it is such a rarity here is surprising, since it has been found more often elsewhere in northern Europe. Slack (2009) listed 15 records up to the end of 2007, with Sweden (seven) leading the pack, followed by the Netherlands (four), Norway (two) and singles from Switzerland and Belgium. Of these, seven turned up in May and two in June. The date of the Hartlepool bird falls towards the end of this pattern of spring overshooting, with only the Calf of Man bird being later. White-throated Robin returns to the breeding grounds in April, so it is unclear why vagrants in northern Europe appear up to two months after the bulk of the population begins to breed. In contrast, four of the six autumn birds were found in August, presumably coinciding with departure from the closest breeding grounds in Turkey; could this be a pointer for a future British vagrant?

(Breeds C Turkey & N Israel E through S Caucasus region to Uzbekistan, & S to Iran & N Afghanistan. Winters E Africa from Ethiopia S to Tanzania.)

Thrush Nightingale *Luscinia luscinia* (1, 186, 1)

Fair Isle Auld Haa, 28th May, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*).

(Breeds C & E Europe from S Scandinavia & Baltic countries to Romania & Ukraine, & E through temperate Russia to S Siberia. Winters E Africa, from S Kenya to Zimbabwe.)



Hugh Harrop

356. First-winter male Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope*, Gulberwick, Shetland, October 2011.

Siberian Rubythroat *Calliope calliope* (0, 7, 1)

Shetland Gulberwick, Mainland, first-winter male, 18th–30th October, photo (L. Dalziel, A. Ockendon *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 448; plate 356).

There was nothing surprising about either the date or the location of this gem. All have turned up between 5th and 26th October, and Shetland and Fair Isle have shared five of the previous seven records. The surprise here was the length of its stay: 13 days, more than a week longer than any other. The pale-tipped tertials and greater coverts confirmed that this was a first-winter, just like all the others aged in Britain. Its immaturity did not detract from its appeal, however, as in most other respects this bird looked as good as an adult male, and was much appreciated by the many birders who made the trek to Gulberwick. Incidentally, this same garden also yielded Hume's Warbler, Western Bonelli's Warbler, Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* and Pechora Pipit *A. gustavi* during autumn 2011!

The Siberian Rubythroat is a rare breeder in the Western Palearctic, where it is found only in willow scrub in the Ural Mountains. It is, however, common to abundant across vast swathes of Siberia and into northernmost Japan. There does not appear to be any evidence of a recent range expansion, such as that recorded for Red-flanked Bluetail, or a surge in occurrences elsewhere in Europe, which could explain the spate of British records in the past decade. Perhaps it is just a reflection of increasing observer awareness and effort.

(Breeds European foothills of Ural Mountains, & Siberia from Ob River E to Anadyr & Kamchatka, & S to N Mongolia, Ussuriland, NE Hokkaido & NE China, also isolated population on E slopes of Tibetan Plateau. Winters from Nepal E through Himalayan foothills to NE India, Burma & N Indochina to C Thailand, S China & Taiwan.)

Red-flanked Bluetail *Tarsiger cyanurus* (2, 97, 13)

Cheshire & Wirral Hilbre, first-winter, 16th October, trapped, photo (J. Elliott, S. R. Williams *et al.*). Dorset Durlston CP, first-summer, 2nd–6th April, photo (K. Black, I. M. Lewis *et al.*).

Co. Durham Whitburn CP, first-winter male, 13th–19th October, photo (D. M. Foster, M. Newsome *et al.*). Whitburn CP, first-winter, 10th November, photo (P. Hogg per Durham Recorder).

Kent Reculver Marshes, first-winter, 14th–16th October, trapped, photo (C. H. & M. J. Hindle *et al.*). Northward Hill RSPB, female, 15th October, trapped, photo (J. Horton, K. Lewis).

Norfolk Holme, first-winter male, 15th October, trapped, photo (S. Barker, G. Elton *et al.*).

Orkney Holland, Papa Westray, first-winter, 14th–15th October, photo (S. Davies *et al.*).

Suffolk Minsmere RSPB, 13th–14th October, photo (S. H. Piotrowski *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 449). Orfordness, first-winter, 13th–16th October, trapped, photo (D. Crawshaw, G. J. Jobson, M. Marsh *et al.*). Landguard, first-winter, 14th November, trapped, photo (N. Odin, O. R. Slessor *et al.*).

Yorkshire Flamborough Head, first-winter, 13th–15th October, trapped, photo (S. Morgan *et al.*).

Flamborough Head, first-winter, 16th–18th October, trapped, photo (I. Marshall *et al.*).

2010 Fife Fife Ness, first-winter, 28th September, trapped, photo (J. L. S. Cobb).

(Breeds NE Finland E through boreal forests of N Russia & Siberia to Kamchatka, N Japan & NE China. Winters S China, Taiwan & S Japan through SE Asia to N peninsular Thailand.)

Collared Flycatcher *Ficedula albicollis* (1, 31, 3)

Fair Isle Hoini, first-summer male, 30th April to 5th May, photo (J. Moss, S. West *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 193).

Norfolk Holme, first-summer male, 8th May, photo (D. Roche *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 194).

Shetland Manse, Foula, male, 14th May, photo (D. & G. Atherton *et al.*).

(Breeds E France, S Germany, Italy & Baltic islands of Gotland & Öland, E through C & E Europe to European Russia W of Urals. Winters E & C Africa, from Tanzania to Zimbabwe.)

Siberian Stonechat *Saxicola maurus* (1, 345, 2)

Cleveland Seaton Carew, first-winter male, 3rd–4th December, photo (G. Icton *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, male, 25th–26th October, photo (M. Warren *et al.*).

2010 Yorkshire Carr Naze, Filey, first-winter/female, 10th October, photo (S. Cochrane *et al.*).

(Nominate race breeds Siberia from N Urals S to N Caspian Sea, Mongolia & N China, & E to Kolyma basin, Okhotsk coast & N Japan. Winters from Middle East & N Indian subcontinent to S China & SE Asia. Other races occur S & E Asia.)

Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina* (1, 27, 3)

Gower Wernffrwd, first-winter male, 5th–10th November, photo (R. H. A. Taylor *et al.*) (plate 357).



Dave Barnes

357. First-winter male Isabelline Wheatear *Oenanthe isabellina*, Wernffrwd, Gower, November 2011.

Sussex Crowlink, Friston, first-winter, 15th October, photo (M. E. & R. H. Charlwood, A. R. H. & G. D. Swash *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, 4th–5th November, trapped, photo (S. Exley, A. J. Gibson, A. Roadhouse *et al.*).

(Breeds Black Sea coast from E Greece N to Ukraine & SW Russia, & E from Turkey through Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, S to Iran & N Pakistan. Winters Africa from N Sahel zone to E Africa, & Middle East to S Iran, Pakistan & NW India.)

Pied Wheatear *Oenanthe pleschanka* (2, 59, 3)

Avon Oldbury-on-Severn, first-winter female, 25th–28th October, photo (D. M. Spittle *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 450).

Norfolk Undisclosed location, first-winter female, 10th–13th November, photo (A. J. Prater *et al.*).

Yorkshire Spurn, female, 8th–9th November, photo (R. Hopson, A. Roadhouse *et al.*).

(Breeds E Romania & Bulgaria, E though S & E Ukraine, S Russia, S Siberia, Kazakhstan & Mongolia to N China, E to Gulf of Bohai. Winters NE & E Africa, & SW Arabian Peninsula.)

Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti* (9, 105, 12)

Cleveland Boulby, male, 8th–10th November, photo (D. Page, E. C. Parker *et al.*).

Devon Man Sands, Brixham, male, 18th–22nd November, photo (P. Albrechtsen, M. Langman *et al.*) (plate 36).

Kent Dungeness, female, 15th November, photo (W. R. Hayward, O. Leyshon, D. Walker *et al.*).

Norfolk Holme and Titchwell Marsh RSPB, male, 10th–15th November, photo (S. Barker, T. Bennett *et al.*).

North-east Scotland Girdle Ness, male, 4th November, photo (A. J. Whitehouse *et al.*).

Northumberland Newbiggin-by-the-Sea, male, 4th December into 2012, photo (D. Elliott *et al.*) (plate 73).

Orkney Deerness, Mainland, female, 29th–31st October, photo (K. E. Hague, P. Higson, M. Rendall *et al.*). North Ronaldsay, first-winter male, 3rd–5th November, photo (P. A. Brown, R. J. Else *et al.*).

Pembrokeshire Skomer, first-winter male, 15th November, photo (D. Boyle, J. Gillham, C. Taylor).

Shetland Lerwick, Mainland, female, 7th–14th December, photo (H. R. Harrop, R. A. Haywood, J. Pierce *et al.*).



Oliver Smart

358. Female Desert Wheatear *Oenanthe deserti*, Titterstone Clee Hill, Shropshire, December 2011.

Shropshire Titterstone Clee Hill, female, 25th November to 10th December, photo (J. Kernohan *et al.*) (plate 358).

Yorkshire Bampton, first-winter male, 19th November into 2012, photo (D. Stansfield *et al.*).

(Breeds desert regions of N Africa from Morocco to Middle East, N to S Caucasus, & C Asia from C Iran & N Pakistan to Mongolia & N China. Some N African birds resident, but most winter Sahara & Sahel region of N Africa from Mauritania E to Ethiopia & Somalia. Asian breeders winter Arabian Peninsula to NW India.)

Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis* (0, 7, 1)

Hampshire Calshot, male, 3rd December into 2012, photo (D. Bishop, A. R. Collins, S. Larter *et al.*) (plates 101, 359).

This record, the eighth for Britain, was both the first for Hampshire and the first for December. Trying to establish any real pattern from these eight records is difficult, although there is a perceptible westerly bias (two from Scilly, one each from Devon, Cornwall, Pembrokeshire and Cumbria, with the remaining record from Orkney). So far, all the British records have involved males, but in 2010 a female was found with House Sparrows *P. domesticus* at Ijmuiden, the Netherlands (Slaterus 2012). Attention was initially drawn to that bird by its call, but the cold plumage tones, the dark, heavy bill and the pale tramlines on the upperparts all supported the identification. Later analysis of recordings of the call confirmed the identification. Birders in

Scandinavia and the Netherlands seem to have embraced sound recording into their everyday birding much more readily than British birders and this record shows just how vital vocalisation 'evidence' might be in confirming a record.

(Breeds Cape Verde, Canary Islands & NW Africa, N to Iberian Peninsula, Sardinia, Balkans E to SW Asia, E through C Asia to E Kazakhstan, NW China & S to Afghanistan. European breeders mainly resident, C Asian breeders migratory, wintering NE Africa, Arabian Peninsula & Iran to NW India.)



Gary Jenkins

359. Male Spanish Sparrow *Passer hispaniolensis*, Calshot, Hampshire, February 2012.

Yellow Wagtail *Motacilla flava*

SE European/W Asian race, 'Black-headed Wagtail' *M. f. feldegg* (0, 16, 1)

Anglesey Cemlyn, male, 6th May, photo (D. Wright *et al.*).

(Race *feldegg* breeds Balkans & Greece E through Turkey to E Kazakhstan & Afghanistan, S to Iran. Western populations winter Nigeria to Uganda & S to Congo, eastern populations winter NW India.)

Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* (0, 243, 20)

Anglesey Cemlyn, male, 17th May (A. Davies, R. Miller); also seen Denbighshire.

Denbighshire Conwy RSPB, male, 15th–16th May, photo (T. E. Giles, S. Gillies *et al.*); also seen Anglesey.

Fair Isle Auld Haa, Utra and Da Water, first-winter, 13th–16th August, sound recording, photo (J. Moss, B. Wilcock *et al.*). Furse and Observatory, first-winter, 6th–17th September, trapped,

photo (W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby *et al.*). Easter Lothar, first-winter, 15th September, photo (R. D. Hughes *et al.*). Field and Barkland, first-winter, 17th September to 3rd October, photo (W. T. S. Miles *et al.*). Auld Haa, first-winter, 10th October (J. Hunt, B. J. Small) (fig. 5, p. 613).

Isles of Scilly Abbey Pool, Tresco, juvenile/first-winter, 21st–23rd August, photo (K. Webb *et al.*). Big Pool, St Agnes, first-winter, 31st August (G. K. Gordon, F. D. Hicks). Lower Moors, St Mary's, first-winter, 13th September, photo (K. Webb *et al.*).

Lancashire & N Merseyside Seaforth, first-winter, 28th August, photo (G. Thomas *et al.*). Seaforth, first-winter, 2nd September, photo (P. Kinsella *et al.*).

Norfolk East Runton, adult male, 24th April, photo (per Norfolk Recorder) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 195). Cley-next-the-Sea, female, 7th–8th May, photo (M. A. Golley, A. N. Johnson *et al.*). Cley-next-the-Sea, first-winter, 6th–10th September, photo (S. Welch *et al.*).

Orkney North Ronaldsay, three: Garso Loch, first-winter, 2nd–7th September (P. A. Brown, R. J. Else, M. Warren); Kirbest Mire, first-winter, 12th–24th September, photo (M. Warren *et al.*); Bewan Loch, first-winter, 20th–26th September, photo (R. J. Else *et al.*).

Oxfordshire Farmoor Resr, first-winter, 10th September, photo (D. M. Lowe *et al.*).

Shetland Quendale, Mainland, first-winter, 1st–2nd October, photo (P. V. Harvey, R. Riddington *et al.*); presumed same Fleck, Mainland, 3rd–11th October, photo (R. M. Fray, M. J. Lawson *et al.*).

Sussex Cuckmere Haven, first-winter, 25th September, photo (A. D. & I. J. Whitcomb *et al.*).

2010 Shetland Norwick, Unst, juvenile/first-winter, 17th September (M. A. Maher).

2010 Yorkshire Spurn, first-winter, 5th September, photo (N. P. Barlow, S. Buckle, P. Johnson *et al.*).

(Breeds Baltic countries, S Finland, Belarus, Ukraine & S Russia, E across N Siberia to Taimyr Peninsula & S to C Siberia; also C & E Turkey E to Kazakhstan, Mongolia & N China. Black-backed race *calcarata* breeds C Asia to Tibetan Plateau. Winters throughout Indian subcontinent, S China & SE Asia to peninsular Thailand.)

Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni* (1, 348, 26)

Cornwall Church Cove, Lizard, 1st November (A. Blunden, S. Kolodziejski, A. R. Pay).

Fair Isle North Light and Furse, 1st October, photo (J. P. Cook, C. Dodd, W. T. S. Miles). Setter, 17th October, photo (M. T. Breaks *et al.*). Finniquoy and Gilsetter, 7th November (W. T. S. Miles, D. Parnaby). Gilly Burn, two, 10th November, presumed one of same again on 12th, sound recording (one bird), photo (D. Parnaby).

Isles of Scilly Watermill, St Mary's, two, 18th–23rd October, photo (S. Huggins *et al.*); presumed one of same Barnaby Lane, St Agnes, 24th October (G. K. Gordon *et al.*). Lower Town, St Agnes,



Stef McElwee

360. Olive-backed Pipit *Anthus hodgsoni*, Baltasound, Unst, Shetland, October 2011.

30th October to 2nd November, photo (G. K. Gordon *et al.*).

Northumberland Inner Farne, Farne Islands, 1st October (W. Scott *et al.*).

Orkney West Ness, North Ronaldsay, 13th–15th October, photo (M. A. Wilkinson *et al.*).

Shetland Hoswick, Mainland, 1st October, photo (J. G. Brown, P. M. Ellis). Brake, Mainland, 1st–2nd October, photo (R. Haughton *et al.*). Law Lane and Helendale, Lerwick, Mainland, 2nd

October (A. J. Bull, C. A. Holt *et al.*). Sumburgh, Mainland, 2nd October (D. Fairhurst *et al.*).

Channerwick, Mainland, 3rd–5th October, photo (C. Fentiman, T. J. Wilson *et al.*). Baltasound, Unst, 4th–6th October, photo (J. J. Sweeney, G. T. White *et al.*) (plate 360). Skibberhoull, Whalsay,

9th–11th October (J. Dunn, D. Fairhurst). Norwick, Unst, 16th October (B. H., C. H. & V. Thomason). Skaw, Unst, 28th October, photo (R. Brookes *et al.*). Sumburgh, Mainland,

11th–12th November, photo (R. Riddington *et al.*). Norwick, Unst, 16th–19th November, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*). Gulberwick, Mainland, 17th November (D. Coutts, A. Ockendon).

Suffolk Lowestoft, 15th–16th October (J. Taylor *et al.*).

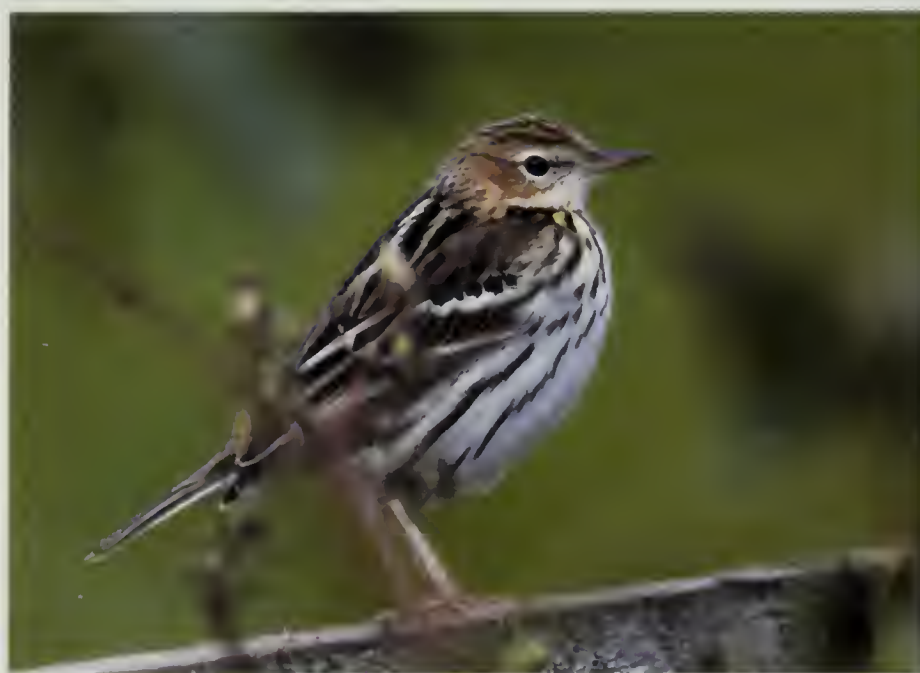
Yorkshire Filey CP, two, 26th–28th October, photo (F. X. Moffatt *et al.*).

For some birders the Olive-backed Pipit remains a quintessential late-autumn treat, with all the enchantment that the juxtaposition of the words ‘Siberian’ and ‘vagrant’ bring, even though it has become a lot more common since the celebrated 27th for Britain, in that Bracknell (Berkshire) garden from February to April 1984. With the 400th record fast approaching and no fewer than 26 in 2011 alone, it is one of the most common species still considered by the Committee. All of that should not dissuade rare-bird finders from the sheer joy of finding one of these charismatic, tail-pumping Sibes. Howling northwesterlies in October in Shetland would at one time have discouraged any observer from leaving their bed/sofa/desk (delete as appropriate) but we’re still learning that rare birds turn up with the weather or in spite of it. In just such conditions, three observers headed out for one of the most sheltered places on Unst, the school at Baltasound, on 4th October 2011. Counter-intuitively, they were splendidly rewarded with an Olive-backed Pipit, a Rustic Bunting *Emberiza rustica* and a Common Rosefinch *Carpodacus erythrinus*. These kind of low-expectation/high-result events are a great example of the dance that goes on each year between those who search for rare birds and the birds themselves.

(Race *yunnanensis* breeds N Urals E across C & E Siberia to N China, Kamchatka, Kuril Islands & Japan. Winters widely across S China, Taiwan & throughout N & C parts of SE Asia. Nominate race breeds Himalayas & mountains of WC China, wintering throughout Indian subcontinent.)

Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi* (4, 87, 3)

Orkney Holland House, North Ronaldsay, 1st October, trapped, photo (K. Fairclough, M. Warren *et al.*).



Hugh Harrop

Shetland Burns and Ham, Foula, 18th–20th September (P. R. French, K. D. Shaw, G. C. Taylor). Gulberwick, Mainland, 20th October, photo (H. R. Harrop *et al.*) (plate 361).

(Breeds scrub-tundra & taiga of subarctic Eurasia, from Pechora region of NE Russia E to Chukotskiy Peninsula & Kamchatka. Migrates through E China & Taiwan to wintering areas in Philippines, N Borneo & N Sulawesi. Isolated race, *menzbieri*, breeds NE China & Amur River region of SE Russia.)

361. Pechora Pipit *Anthus gustavi*, Gulberwick, Shetland, October 2011.

Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens* (1, 19, 7)

Orkney Bewan Loch, North Ronaldsay, two, 22nd–26th September, photo (R. J. Else, I. Ford, M. Warren *et al.*).

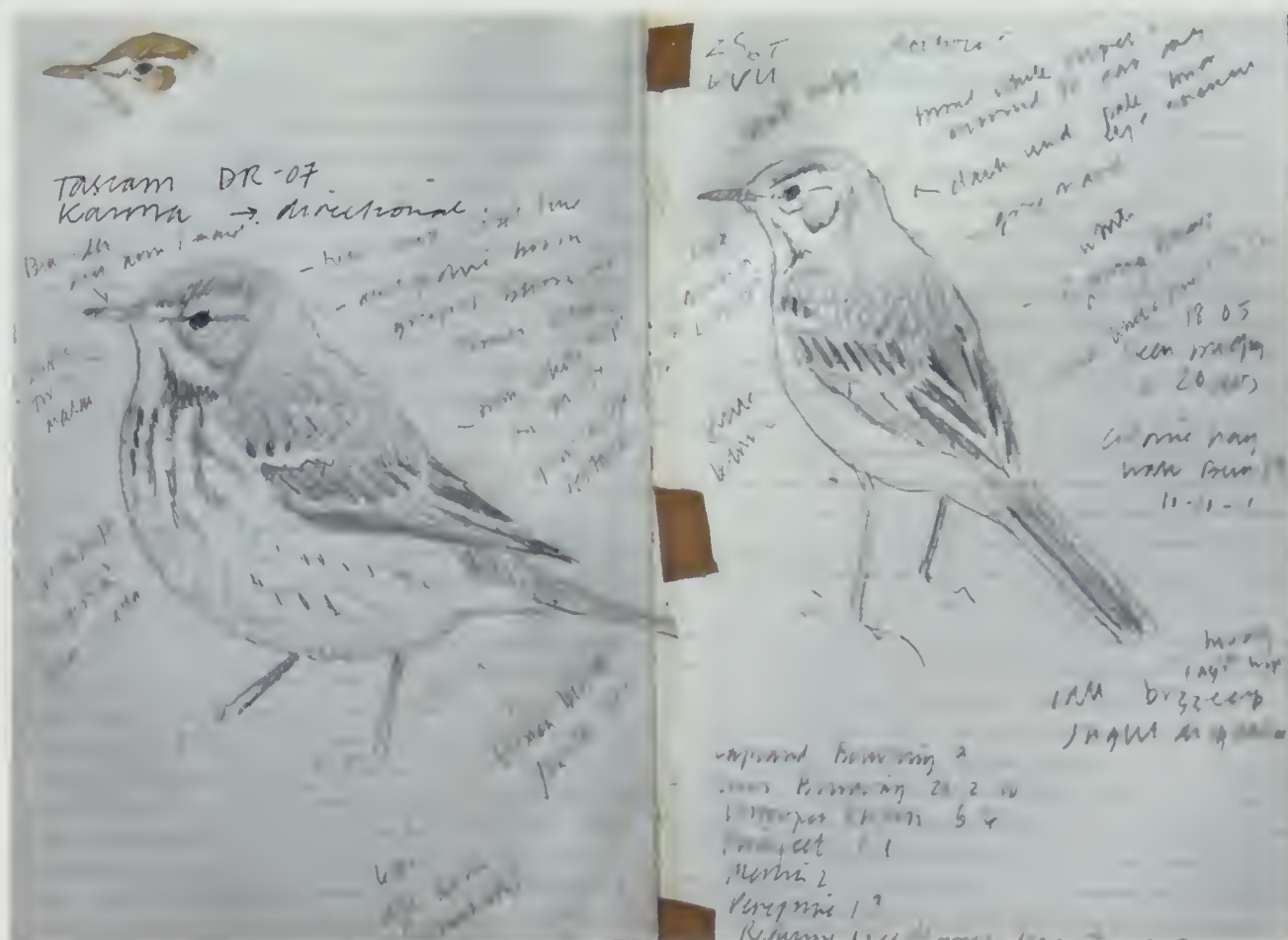
Outer Hebrides Hirta, St Kilda, 18th September, photo (R. Johnson, S. C. Votier *et al.*).

Shetland Foula, 22nd and 26th September, two on 29th–30th (one of which presumed same as 22nd/26th), one remaining to 1st October, photo (K. B. Shepherd, N. D. Wright *et al.*). Quendale, Mainland, 8th–13th October, photo (M. Garner *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 451; fig. 5).

Sussex Newhaven, 9th October, photo (N. G. Morris).

With just four records prior to 2005, this was formerly one of the rarer Nearctic passerines. But the species' meteoric rise continues unabated and 2011 was the joint best year (with 2007). The spread of seven records broadly follows the establishing pattern of mid-autumn arrivals in the Northern Isles and Outer Hebrides. That two should be found together on North Ronaldsay is remarkable enough, but for another two to be present together on Foula (and three of these four were found on the same date) suggests that we may still be missing a proportion of new arrivals. It remains to be seen just how regular Buff-bellied Pipit will become, and we cannot say to what extent observer awareness has affected the number of records, but it is tempting to speculate that this species may be increasing in Greenland, the nearest breeding grounds to Britain. The lack of data makes any assessment very difficult, but Greenland breeders that first migrate to the southern tip of Greenland before undertaking the sea crossing to Canada are then at the same latitude as Shetland; autumn storms may subsequently make them vulnerable to displacement to northwestern Britain.

If more birds are overwintering undiscovered in Britain and western Europe, it may be that this species is establishing a new migration route into Europe, and that at the moment we are (mostly) finding the new arrivals in the northwest. Such a route is already used by Northern Wheatears *Oenanthe o. leucorhoa* and Common Redpolls *Carduelis flammea rostrata* and this scenario opens up the possibility of further mainland records. Observers should certainly be on the



Brian J. Small

Fig. 5. Buff-bellied Pipit *Anthus rubescens*, Quendale, Shetland, October 2011 (left) and Citrine Wagtail *Motacilla citreola* on Fair Isle in the same month.

lookout in all areas and at all times of year, as this year's individual in Sussex and previous records in Oxfordshire and Lincolnshire illustrate. This is one Nearctic passerine you could realistically find on your local reservoir, but if you can't wait until then a trip to the remote and windswept islands of northern and western Scotland seem more and more likely to pay dividends.

(North American race *rubescens* breeds W Greenland, N & NW Canada, & Alaska, winters W & S USA, Mexico & C America. Asian race *japonica* breeds NE Siberia W to Baikal region, winters N Pakistan & NW India to S & E China, S Korea & S Japan.)

Arctic Redpoll *Carduelis hornemanni*

Greenland race, 'Hornemann's Redpoll' *C. h. hornemanni* (11, 79, 0)

2009 Shetland Between Aithbank and Loch of Funzie, Fetlar, 5th October (J. R. Best, R. L. Musgrove), presumed same as Fetlar 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 630–631.

2006 Fair Isle North Light, 30th October (M. Warren).

(Race *hornemanni* breeds Ellesmere & Baffin Island, Canada, & N Greenland S to Scorsby Sound. Disperses erratically to S of breeding range in winter, irregularly reaching NW Europe.)

Two-barred Crossbill *Loxia leucoptera* (73, 173, 7)

Shetland Halligarth, Unst, two: first-summer female, 29th July to 1st August, male, 30th July to 1st August, photo (B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit Birds* 104: plate 291). Sumburgh Head, Mainland, adult female, 14th August (R. M. Fray). Trondra, juvenile, 14th August (G. & J. D. Okill).

Yorkshire Kilnsea, Spurn, adult female, 27th July (R. J. Butcher, P. Collins). Kilnsea, Spurn, two, adult female and juvenile, 12th August (R. J. Butcher).

2009 Fair Isle South Light, 23rd–24th July, photo (A. H. J. Harrop); note revised dates, *Brit. Birds* 103: 632.

(Palearctic race *bifasciata* breeds larch *Larix* forests of N Eurasia from N Scandinavia to E Siberia, reaching Sea of Okhotsk & S to Baikal region. Outside breeding season occasionally disperses as far as NW Europe. Nominate race *leucoptera* breeds across N North America.)

Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus* (0, 15, 1)

Devon Lundy, adult male, 13th–25th May, photo (S. Barnes, B. & C. Canavan, S. O'Donnell *et al.*) (plate 362); presumed same Morte Point, near Woolacombe, 2nd June, photo (C. D. Stacey).

(Largely resident, from Canary Islands, SE Spain & deserts of N Africa, E through Middle East to S Iran & Pakistan. E populations dispersive, some wintering E to deserts of NW India.)



Lee Dingain

362. Adult male Trumpeter Finch *Bucanetes githagineus*, Lundy, Devon, May 2011.

Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea* (0, 4, 2)

Cornwall St Levan, first-winter male, 20th–21st October, photo (D. Lewis, M. Southam per Cornwall Recorder).

Isles of Scilly Sandy Lane, St Mary's, first-winter male, 22nd October, photo (S. Bird, G. Nichols *et al.*) (plate 363).

That two different Scarlet Tanagers should turn up in the southwest, just a couple of days apart, seems at first sight remarkable, given that these are only the fifth and sixth records for Britain and the first since 1982. Three of those four previous records were from Scilly during the 'golden years' of the seventies and eighties, and have endured as



Martin Goodey

363. First-winter male Scarlet Tanager *Piranga olivacea*, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011.

symbols of the islands' ability to attract extremely rare Nearctic passerines; and the other British record was from Cornwall, in 1981. The two birds in 2011 were separable on plumage but even so, multiple arrivals of commoner Nearctic passerines are not unprecedented: Red-eyed Vireo *Vireo olivaceus*, Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* and Grey-cheeked Thrush *Catharus minimus* have all arrived in multiples before, while Britain's first Tennessee Warbler *Oreothlypis peregrina*, on Fair Isle in 1975, was followed by another less than three weeks later on the same island. What's more, in 1985, two Scarlet Tanagers were found within a week of each other at Firkeel, in Co. Cork.

(Breeds SE Canada, & throughout E USA S to E Oklahoma, C Alabama & N Georgia. Winters South America from Colombia to Bolivia.)

Rose-breasted Grosbeak *Pheucticus ludovicianus* (0, 23, 1)

Orkney Near Stenaquoy, Eday, first-winter male, 10th October (M. & M. Cockram *et al.*).

Given that most arrival dates fall between 29th September and 5th November, and the peak ten-day period is 1st–10th October, this individual falls neatly into the prime time slot for this species. Only two birds have been found outside that autumn window: a wintering first-winter male at Leigh-on-Sea, Essex, from 20th December 1975 to 4th January 1976 and a first-summer female at Holme, Norfolk, on 4th–5th May 2006.

This year's bird is the first for Orkney and the third for Scotland (the two other Scottish records are from the Outer Hebrides). Twelve of the 24 British records have been on Scilly and there are two records from Devon but surprisingly none from Cornwall. Three Welsh records add to the singles in Yorkshire, Norfolk, Essex and the Isle of Wight to complete the picture.

The number of British records has remained fairly consistent over the past 35 years, with 2–3 records in each of the five-year periods since 1975, bar four in 1975–79 and five in 1985–89. Given the increasing number of active birders, this surely reflects the continuing decline in the breeding populations of Rose-breasted Grosbeak along the Atlantic flyway, shown by the North American Breeding Bird Survey (Sauer *et al.* 2011).

(Breeds C Canada to Nova Scotia & through Midwest & NE USA S to Maryland. Migrates through E USA to winter from C Mexico through C America to N South America.)

White-throated Sparrow *Zonotrichia albicollis* (2, 41, 0)

Hampshire Old Winchester Hill, 7th August 2010 to 17th July (per Hampshire Recorder), presumed same as Hampshire 2009, *Brit. Birds* 103: 632.

(Breeds North America from SE Yukon E to Newfoundland, S to Great Lakes & N USA to New Jersey. Winters SE USA, from Massachusetts S to Florida, Texas & into N Mexico & California.)

Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis* (0, 37, 1)

Hampshire Hawkhill Inclosure, Beaulieu, first-winter male, 24th December into 2012, photo (K. Bennie *et al.*) (plate 102, 364).

2010 Gloucestershire Birdlip, first-winter male, 8th January to 5th April, photo (V. Biggs *et al.*).

Unusually, both of the records in this report are of long-staying, wintering birds. The New Forest bird was well catered for with a steady supply of seed; this individual was a very popular attraction for birders, who appreciated the nearby Spanish Sparrow too. It seems a pity that the Gloucestershire bird wasn't tempted out to a more suitable location in a similar manner, which has certainly been a successful strategy with this species before, most notably for another garden dweller, in Cheshire from December 1997 to April 1998.

Late April and May is the prime time to find a Dark-eyed Junco (with 25 of 38 records turning up in those two months). As with the other North American sparrows, autumn records are unusual, and none has arrived between 14th July (2007) and 7th November (1993), a period when the majority of vagrant North American passerines reach western Europe.

Dark-eyed Junco is a fairly short-distance migrant, with many wintering in the USA south to the gulf states and northern Mexico. In autumn, most North American sparrows don't accumulate the large fat reserves that longer-distance migrants do. Instead, they move south with the onset of cold weather in a series of short hops, and probably lack the necessary fat reserves for an unaided Atlantic crossing. It is assumed that most European vagrants are able to find a food source while being ship-assisted. This species has been found along the English Channel counties with some regularity, often near ports handling transatlantic shipping. Others have been found at south-coast headlands, in the Northern Isles, and there are records from oil installations in sea areas Dogger (two) and Humber. Yet there are still no records from Scilly, nor from Ireland's



John Carter

364. First-winter male Dark-eyed Junco *Junco hyemalis*, Beaulieu, Hampshire, January 2012.

southwest-facing counties of Kerry and Cork, all hotspots of transatlantic vagrancy.

(Breeds North America from N Alaska & N Canada, S to S California, N Texas & N Georgia. British records of forms previously recognised as Slate-coloured Junco, breeding throughout N & E of range, S to Georgia. Northern populations migratory, wintering to S of breeding range.)

Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos* (2, 47, 1)

Shetland Clibberswick, Unst, first-winter female, 5th November, photo (M. G. Pennington, B. H. Thomason *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 452; plate 365).

Pine Bunting remains a major prize for the rarity hunter, with an average of just over one bird per year since the mid 1970s, and peaks of four in 1987, 1994 and 1995. October is certainly the best month for finding one, with 35% of records, followed by November with 19%. Thereafter, there is no obvious pattern. There have been no December records, yet six have been found in January; and while six arrivals in April suggest a return passage, none has yet turned up in May. The winter records are interesting, perhaps a response to severe weather on the near Continent?

The breeding range of Pine Bunting overlaps with that of Yellowhammer *E. citrinella* in parts of Siberia and hybrids can show a range of characters that feature in both species. BBRC's position is that small traces of yellow on the primary fringes, visible only in the closest views, are not a barrier to acceptance as Pine Bunting. The recent paper by Pirhonen (2012) discussing problematic Yellowhammers and Pine Buntings in Finland is interesting reading.

(Breeds Siberia from W Urals to upper Kolyma River, S to SE Kazakhstan, Mongolia, lower Amur River & Sakhalin. Isolated population breeds C China. Small wintering populations W Italy & C Israel. Otherwise winters S of breeding range from Turkestan E through Himalayan foothills to C & E China, N of Yangtze.)



Brydon Thomason

365. First-winter female Pine Bunting *Emberiza leucocephalos*, Clibberswick, Unst, Shetland, November 2011.

Yellow-breasted Bunting *Emberiza aureola* (8, 227, 1)

Shetland Mucklegrind and Hametoun, Foula, juvenile, 25th–27th September, photo (P. R. French *et al.*).

In recent years, Yellow-breasted Bunting has become an increasingly sought-after rarity in Britain. What used to be a reliable target species on a mid-September visit to Shetland has become a true vagrant. From the early 1970s and throughout the 1980s and 90s it was recorded regularly, with an average of around six individuals a year, and that continued into the present century, with six in both 2002 and 2003. Thereafter, a rapid decline set in; there have been just 12 in the past eight years, including four in 2006. This single record for 2011 appeared at a classic location on a typical date.

After spreading into Finland in the second half of the twentieth century, Yellow-breasted Bunting became a regular breeding bird in the marshes fringing the northern Gulf of Bothnia. The species was not considered by the Finnish Rarities Committee after 1984 but, after breeding ceased and numbers declined, it was reinstated as a Finnish rarity in 2006. At the eastern limit of its range a similar decline has occurred in Japan; it was fairly widespread in eastern and northern Hokkaido until the 1990s, but it has now ceased to breed there (M. Brazil pers. comm.). Data from elsewhere in the breeding range is lacking, but there are vast tracts of apparently suitable habitat across European Russia and Siberia. Recent anecdotal information from passage sites and wintering areas point to excessive trapping as a possible cause, and the species' decline has led to BirdLife International reclassifying it as Vulnerable. Yellow-breasted Buntings are particularly vulnerable to trapping as they feed on ripening and spilt rice grains in large numbers. In China, Yellow-breasted Buntings (and other small passerines) are cooked and sold as 'sparrows' or 'rice-birds'. Although this practice was banned in 1997, huge numbers are still trapped and sold illegally, for example an estimated 10,000 birds sold daily in a single market at Sanshui in China's Guangdong province. Demand is also fuelled by the superstition that stuffed males confer happiness in the home, while the releasing of birds at temples by religious practitioners allegedly confers merit upon those setting the birds free. In addition, agricultural intensification and the consequent loss of winter stubble may have affected the availability of food sources. (www.birdlife.org/datazone/speciesfactsheet.php?id=8954)

This decline is surely reflected in the current status of the species in Britain and it will be interesting to see how it fares in the coming years.

(Breeds widely across Russia & Siberia E to Kamchatka, S to NE China & NE Hokkaido. Winters E Nepal through Himalayan foothills to NE India, & widely throughout SE Asia.)

Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala* (7, 189, 5)



Rob Brookes

At sea Sea area Forties, female, 26th–31st May, photo (A. J. Taylor).

Fair Isle Vaadal then other areas, male, 3rd–16th July, photo (D. C. Jardine *et al.*).

Highland Mallaig, male, 31st May to 2nd June, photo (L. A. & M. L. Affleck *et al.*).

Northumberland Staple Island and Brownsman, Farne Islands, 31st May, photo (C. Hatsell, J. Ibbotson, D. Steel *et al.*).

Shetland Belmont, Unst, first-winter, 28th September to 5th October, sound recording, photo (D. Chaney, M. Duckham, I. Maclean *et al.* per Shetland Recorder) (plate 366).

(Breeds C Italy to Greece, Turkey, N Iraq, W Iran, & N through Caucasus to Ukraine & S Russia. Winters W & C India.)

366. First-winter Black-headed Bunting *Emberiza melanocephala*, Belmont, Unst, Shetland, October 2011.

Baltimore Oriole *Icterus galbula* (1, 22, 1)

Isles of Scilly Garrison, St Mary's, first-winter, 20th–21st September, photo (R. L. Flood *et al.* per birding information services).

The peak period for the discovery of this species extends from 26th September to 5th October, with over half of the 15 autumn records found during this ten-day period. The bird on Scilly was in fact the second-earliest autumn arrival, after one on Fair Isle on 19th–20th September 1974.

Following the heady days of the 1960s, when ten Baltimore Orioles made it into these reports, the species has been harder to come by: two in the 70s, four in the 80s, three in the 90s and just two others since 2000: in Oxfordshire from 10th December 2003 to 16th January 2004, and near John O'Groats, Caithness, on 24th–27th May 2007.

The Garrison bird was the seventh for Scilly, making Baltimore Oriole the ninth most frequent (of 29) Nearctic landbirds recorded on the archipelago. What's next for these hallowed islands? After White-throated Sparrow finally arrived in 2010, statistics suggest that Dark-eyed Junco then Veery are the most likely species (although, with two records in Cornwall, American Redstart *Setophaga ruticilla* is long overdue and would be especially welcome – the last record was way back in 1985).

(Breeds S Canada from C Alberta E to C Nova Scotia, S throughout E USA from N Texas to W South Carolina. Migrates to winter from S Mexico to Colombia & Venezuela.)

Ovenbird *Seiurus aurocapilla* (0, 4, 1)

Outer Hebrides Castlebay, Barra, 23rd–24th October (S. Beeby, C. Saunders *et al.*).

With just four previous records, Ovenbird remains a top-drawer rarity, and the statistics offer few clues about where to expect the next one. A wing found on the tideline at Formby, Lancashire & N Merseyside, in January 1969 is no longer deemed acceptable as a British first, so that honour is now taken by the bird on Out Skerries, Shetland, in October 1973. Three of the subsequent four were found between 22nd and 25th October (Wembury, Devon, 1985, St Mary's, Scilly, 2004, and the 2011 bird) while the odd one out in more ways than one was the wintering bird at Much Marcle, Herefordshire, which stayed from December 2001 to February 2002 (see following account). The Barra Ovenbird was seen by just a handful of birders as it skulked around its chosen copse; only the bird on Scilly was twitchable by the masses.

(Breeds Canada from SE British Columbia E to Newfoundland & S throughout C & E USA to N Alabama & South Carolina. Winters from Florida & N Mexico S to Panama & West Indies.)

Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis* (0, 6, 1)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary's, 16th September into 2012, trapped, photo (J. & T. G. Davies *et al.*) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 387; plate 367).

The seventh for Britain and the fifth for Scilly. Following in the wake of Hurricane Katia, the arrival of this bird was part of a classic 'fallout' of Nearctic birds on



Martin Goodey

367. Northern Waterthrush *Parkesia noveboracensis*, Lower Moors, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, October 2011.

Scilly: following an exceptionally early Red-eyed Vireo on 13th September, within a week there was, on St Mary's alone, Blue-winged Teal, eight Buff-breasted Sandpipers *Tryngites subruficollis*, Solitary Sandpiper, Baltimore Oriole, Northern Waterthrush and a Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (discovered by birders trying to relocate the Northern Waterthrush!). All this at a stage in the autumn when observer coverage across the islands was limited. Yet, in past autumns some of the rarest of Americans have also arrived by mid September: Yellow-throated Vireo *Vireo flavifrons*, Purple Martin *Progne subis*, Northern Mockingbird *Mimus polyglottos*, Summer Tanager *Piranga rubra*, Tennessee Warbler (on three occasions), Blackburnian Warbler *Setophaga fusca*, Yellow Warbler *S. petechia* (also on three occasions) and Chestnut-sided Warbler *S. pensylvanica* have all been found on or before 20th September.

The Northern Waterthrush went on to winter on St Mary's and was last noted there in April. It thus became the first of over 200 individual Nearctic landbirds on Scilly to overwinter there and the 15th Nearctic landbird species to overwinter in Britain (if we define 'overwintering' as a stay after the New Year), and the sixth North American wood-warbler to do so. It joins Ovenbird (Herefordshire, 20th December 2001 to 16th February 2002), Golden-winged Warbler *Vermivora chrysoptera* (Kent, 24th January to 10th April 1989), Common Yellowthroat *Geothlypis trichas* (Kent, 6th January to 23rd April 1989), Yellow-rumped Warbler *Setophaga coronata* (Devon, 4th January to 10th February 1955) and, arguably, Black-and-white Warbler (Devon, 3rd March 1978). Unlike most of these, though, the Northern Waterthrush seems to have chosen to winter at its likely point of arrival in Britain. The habitat at Lower Moors and the mild climate of the islands presumably negated the need to continue its journey.

(Breeds C Alaska E across Canada to Labrador & Newfoundland, & S to N USA from N Idaho to Massachusetts. Migrates through E USA to winter from Mexico & Cuba S to N South America.)

Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia* (1, 12, 1)

Isles of Scilly Lower Moors, St Mary's, first-winter male, 17th–21st September, photo (C. Ridgard et al. per birding information services) (*Brit. Birds* 104: plate 386; plate 368).

This, the only member of the genus *Mniotilta* (which translates into 'moss-plucking'), is the fourth most frequently recorded of the North American wood-warblers in Britain; only Blackpoll Warbler (43), Yellow-rumped Warbler (17) and Northern Parula *Setophaga americana* (15) out-



Ian Wilson

368. First-winter male Black-and-white Warbler *Mniotilta varia*, Lower Moors, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, September 2011.

score it. Its occurrences have been anything but regular though: recorded in eight of the 13 years between 1975 and 1987, then a gap of eight years before a record four birds in 1996, while the Lower Moors bird is the first since then.

Predictably, the southwest accounts for the majority of British records, Scilly leading the way on five, followed by Cornwall and Devon with two each. Perhaps surprisingly there have been two in Norfolk, while Shetland (pre-1950), Pembrokeshire and Sussex each have a single to their name.

Most have arrived between 1st September and 3rd December, with six between 24th September and 8th October. The two Norfolk birds were the latest to be found – 9th November 1996 and 3rd December 1985 – both had doubtless been roaming the British countryside for some time before they were discovered. In addition, there is a remarkable spring record of one at Tavistock, Devon, on 3rd March 1978 – could this transatlantic gem, the nearest thing you can get to a mint humbug with wings, have gone unnoticed right through the winter? Black-and-white Warblers regularly join mixed feeding flocks in their native range and a number of those seen here have been associating with tit flocks, so the more optimistic bird finders could do worse than target such flocks.

(Breeds Canada from SW Nunavut E to Newfoundland & S to Texas & Georgia. Migrates through E USA to winter from N Mexico to Florida & Bahamas, S through West Indies to N South America.)

Blackpoll Warbler *Setophaga striata* (0, 42, 1)

Kent Tunbridge Wells, 19th November (A. Appleton, B. Wright *et al.*).

The first for Kent, recalling the two records in neighbouring Sussex, at Pett Level on 15th October 2010 and (particularly) at Bewl Water (whose shore forms the border with Kent and is only 10 km or so from Tunbridge Wells) during 10th–20th December 1994. Apart from the Bewl Water bird, 19th November is the latest arrival date by some margin; 6th November 1995 on St Agnes, Scilly, is the third-latest. Presumably, these two inland birds arrived in the UK some time before being discovered. The Tunbridge Wells bird was sadly a short-stayer; in fact, surprisingly few North American landbirds located in Britain in November or December ultimately spend the entire winter in one location.

(Breeds North America from W Alaska E throughout Canada to Newfoundland, & S to Maine, USA. Migrates through E USA to winter NE South America.)

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Appendix 1. Records of former BBRC species, removed from the list prior to 2011

Great White Egret *Ardea alba*

2002 Kent Near Cliffe, 8th–9th July (L. C. Batchelor, P. Larkin).

(Increasing Netherlands & France but breeding range from E Austria to Ukraine fragmented & generally rare. Migratory, most wintering N Africa & E Mediterranean, although increasingly common C & NW Europe. Other populations breed Africa, Asia, Australia & the Americas.)

Red-footed Falcon *Falco vespertinus*

2003 Kent Near Cliffe, male, 15th June (P. Larkin).

(Breeds forested steppe of E Europe from E Hungary to temperate Russia, E to Baikal region. Migratory, wintering SW Africa.)

White-rumped Sandpiper *Calidris fuscicollis*

2005 Kent Cliffe Pools RSPB, first-winter, 24th October (P. Larkin), presumed same as East Tilbury, Essex 2005, *Brit. Birds* 100: 39.

(Breeds N Alaska & Arctic Canada, from Mackenzie River E to S Baffin Island. Overflies W Atlantic to winter S South America.)

Appendix 2. Records where identification accepted, but placed in Category D (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Cumbria Burgh Marsh and Rockcliffe Marsh, adult, 5th October 2010 to 3rd April, photo (C. & R. Shaw *et al.*); presumed same Burgh Marsh, Rockcliffe Marsh and Cardunock, 14th December into 2012, photo (per birding information services); also seen Dumfries & Galloway, Lothian.

Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, adult, 17th September 2010 to 26th February, photo (P. N. Collin *et al.*); also seen Cumbria, Lothian.

Highland Golspie, Udale Bay and nearby sites, adult, 19th–26th April (D. Brown, R. L. Swann *et al.*), presumed same as Burnham Market, Norfolk 2010 (see below).

Lothian Aberlady Bay, adult, 11th October (per birding information services); also seen Cumbria, Dumfries & Galloway.

2010 Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, adult, 4th–9th October, photo (J. Anderson, R. McCurley *et al.*); also seen Norfolk.

2010 Lothian Aberlady Bay, two, adults, 19th September to 2nd October, photo (K. Gillon, C. Scott *et al.*), presumed same as Aberlady Bay 2007, see below.

2010 Norfolk Burnham Market and nearby coastal areas, adult, 26th November to 24th December, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*); also seen Angus & Dundee. Holkham, adult, 29th November to 24th December, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*).

2009 Norfolk Halvergate Marshes and other sites, adult, 6th December 2008 to 24th February, photo (A. Musgrove *et al.*), presumed same as Catchdale Moss, Lancashire & North Merseyside

2008 (see below); also seen Perth & Kinross.

2009 Perth & Kinross Loch Leven, adult, 27th February (K. D. Shaw, J. J. Squire); also seen Norfolk.

2009 Upper Forth Alloa Inch, adult, 9th–10th May (D. M. Bryant *et al.*).

2008 Lancashire & North Merseyside Stalmine, Pilling and Colloway Marsh, adult, 31st January to 4th May, photo (B. Dyson *et al.* per birding information services). Catchdale Moss, Martin Mere, Marshside and Pilling, adult, 24th September to 5th November, photo (per birding information services). Note: one of these two birds also seen Norfolk.

2008 Norfolk Docking, 16th December 2007 to 4th January (J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Branthill and Burnham Overy, adult, 25th December 2007 to 4th January, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Docking area, adult, 29th December 2007 to 4th January, photo (J. R. McCallum *et al.*). Burgh Castle, Bradwell and Belton, adult, 14th–23rd December (P. R. Allard, A. Easton, R. Fairhead per Suffolk Recorder). Note: one of these four was also seen in Suffolk and another in Lancashire & North Merseyside. Three of these presumed same as (1) Saltholme Pools, Cleveland 2007, *Brit. Birds* 101: 575; (2) Holkham, Norfolk 2007, *Brit. Birds* 102: 598; (3) Hauxley, Northumberland 2007, *Brit. Birds* 102: 598 (see comment below).

2008 North-east Scotland Cove Bay, Rattray and Loch of Strathbeg, adult, 28th–30th March (H. E. Maggs, T. W. Marshall *et al.*); also seen Perth & Kinross.

2008 Perth & Kinross Vane Farm, Loch Leven, adult, 15th–26th April, photo (I. Munro, K. D. Shaw, J. J. Squire *et al.*); also seen North-east Scotland.

2008 Suffolk Herringfleet and nearby sites, adult, 13th–14th January (P. J. Ransome per Suffolk Recorder); also seen Norfolk.

2007 Angus & Dundee Montrose Basin, two, adults, 23rd October, photo (per birding information services); also seen Borders, Lothian, North-east Scotland, Perth & Kinross.

2007 Borders Crailing, two, adults, 31st October, photo (per birding information services); also seen Angus & Dundee, Lothian, North-east Scotland, Perth & Kinross.

2007 Lothian Aberlady Bay, two, adults, 24th–27th October, photo (A. Brown, W. McBay *et al.*); also seen Angus & Dundee, Borders, North-east Scotland, Perth & Kinross.

2007 North-east Scotland Kirkton of Slains, two, adults, 5th–8th October, photo (P. Shepherd *et al.* per R. A. Schofield); also seen Angus & Dundee, Borders, Lothian, Perth & Kinross.

2007 Perth & Kinross Loch Leven, two, adults, 20th–23rd October, photo (J. S. Nadin, K. A. & K. D. Shaw, J. J. Squire *et al.*); also seen Angus & Dundee, Borders, Lothian, North-east Scotland.

2003 Cumbria Cardunock, Rockcliffe Marsh and Skinburness Marsh, adult, 3rd December 2002 to 9th February, photo (D. West *et al.*); also seen Dumfries & Galloway.

2003 Dumfries & Galloway Caerlaverock WWT, adult, 16th October 2002 to 19th April, photo (per birding information services); also seen Cumbria.

In the 2008 report we asked for more records, past and current, of this potential addition to the British List. Of the 30-odd submissions received, only two were considered to be escapes or possible hybrids. The remaining records were then analysed to see whether we could estimate how many individuals were involved – a far from easy task and never an exact one. One pointer is that Ross's Geese tend to remain with the carrier species with which they arrive: typically Barnacle Geese *Branta leucopsis*, Pink-footed Geese *Anser brachyrhynchus* or Greylag Geese *A. anser*. We were also helped by one diligent observer who over the 2007/08 winter was able to identify four different individuals in Norfolk, based on structure and minor plumage differences; three of these four were presumed to have been seen earlier in 2007 (in Cleveland, Norfolk and Northumberland), and all three records have already been published in *BB*. Unfortunately, those earlier records did not have sufficient detail to assign them to the specific 'identifiable' overwintering individuals. In addition, in October 2007, two birds roamed Scotland together and, because of distinctive plumage markings, the local observers felt that the same individuals returned four years later. So the seemingly large list above boils down to just 12 new birds. We shall now look at the earlier archived records published in our 2002 and 2004 reports to estimate how many extra birds were involved but it is likely to be as few as four – and around 16 birds in

total have been seen here since the new millennium. All of which means that Ross's Goose is undoubtedly a rare bird!

(Breeds on tundra of Canadian Arctic, from Perry River region of Northwest Territories to N Manitoba, including Southampton Island, E to N Ontario. Most migrate across C USA to wintering grounds in S USA. Numbers increasing on Atlantic seaboard of USA & N Mexico.)

Marbled Duck *Marmaronetta angustirostris*

Lancashire & N Merseyside Freckleton Naze Pool, 4th September, photo (D. Satterthwaite *et al.*).

Sussex Arlington Resr, male, 3rd–9th July, photo (D. & J. F. Cooper, A. R. Kitson *et al.*).

(Breeds N Morocco & S Spain, & Turkey E to S Kazakhstan. Migratory & dispersive outside breeding season. Many Spanish breeders move NE in late summer to Ebro Delta, NE Spain. Some winter N Africa, with small numbers reaching Senegal, Mali & Chad. Asian population winters mostly in Iran.)

Appendix 3. Records where identification accepted, but considered a likely escape and placed in Category E (see *Ibis* 136: 253)

Ross's Goose *Anser rossii*

Northumberland Seahouses, Dunstan Hill and Holywell Pond, two, adults, 28th September to 27th November, photo (E. Galloway, M. S. Hodgson, G. Woodburn *et al.*).

Red-breasted Goose *Branta ruficollis*

Cleveland Saltburn, Scaling Dam and Cowbar, juvenile, 30th September to 9th November, photo (G. Joynt, T. Robinson *et al.*); also seen Yorkshire.

Devon Starcross and Exe Estuary, adult, 11th January to 19th February (T. Vincett).

Sussex Goring Beach, 21st May (R. Ives).

Yorkshire Harwood Dale, Cloughton, first-winter, 30th November into 2012, photo (per birding information services); also seen Cleveland.

Hooded Merganser *Lophodytes cucullatus*

2002 Essex Vange Marsh, juvenile, 2nd–19th August, photo (P. G. Baker *et al.*).

Appendix 4. List of records not accepted

This list contains all current records not accepted after circulation to the Committee. It does not include a) those withdrawn by the observer(s) after discussion with the Secretary; b) those which, even if circulated, were not attributed by the observer(s) to any definite species; c) those mentioned in 'Recent reports' in *British Birds* if full details were unobtainable; or d) certain escapes. In the vast majority of cases, the record was not accepted because we were not convinced that the identification was fully established; only in a very few cases were we satisfied that a mistake had been made.

2011 Ross's Goose Doddington, Northumberland, 29th March to 2nd April. Black-browed Albatross Saltcoats, Ayrshire, 21st May. Off Kilnsea, Spurn, Yorkshire, 1st September. Fea's Petrel Scarborough, Yorkshire, 16th September. Zino's/Fea's Petrel Frinton-on-Sea, Essex, 16th September. Little Bittern River Avon near Malmesbury, Wiltshire, 13th September. Squacco Heron Girlsta, Mainland, Shetland, 17th June. Black Stork Llandoverly, Carmarthenshire, ten, 8th May. Moor End, Halifax, Yorkshire, 1st August. Glossy Ibis Burton Bradstock, Dorset, 14th October. Short-toed Eagle Haldon Forest, Devon, 16th October. Pallid Harrier Nanjizal and Porthgwarra, Cornwall, 6th November. Mellon Charles, Highland, 27th August to 3rd September. Tetford, Lincolnshire, 18th October. Hollow Heath, Norfolk, 10th September. Burnham Deepdale, Norfolk, 21st October. Holy Island, Northumberland, 8th November. Lesser Kestrel Between St Ives and Zennor, Cornwall, 1st November. Wells-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 7th October. Gyr Falcon Loch Caoldair, Highland, 19th January. Black-winged Stilt Paxton Pits, Cambridgeshire, 1st May. Wide-mouth Bay, Cornwall, two, 17th April. Collared Pratincole Crickieth, Caernarfonshire, 15th September. Long-toed Stint *Calidris subminuta* Weir Wood Resr, Sussex, 15th–21st September. Baird's Sandpiper Saltholme RSPB, Cleveland, 28th September. Great Snipe Mousa, Shetland, 27th April. Long-billed Dowitcher Port Carlisle, Cumbria, 16th October. Spotted Sandpiper Drift Resr, Cornwall, 15th September. Marsh Sandpiper Paxton Pits, Cam-

bridgeshire, 29th April. Blithfield Resr, Staffordshire, 4th August. American Herring Gull Tresco, Isles of Scilly, 7th November. Bonaparte's Gull Dornoch Point, Highland, 14th–17th August. Cley-next-the-Sea, Norfolk, 22nd–24th May. Weir Wood Resr, Sussex, 3rd–7th October. Sooty Tern *Onychoprion fuscatus* Kessingland, Suffolk, 10th August. Oriental Turtle Dove Nanjizal, Cornwall, 6th November. Forsinard RSPB, Highland, 10th May. White-throated Needletail *Hirundapus caudacutus* Storrington, Sussex, 4th November. Plain Swift *Apus unicolor* Between Trevescan and Nanjizal, Cornwall, two, 29th July. Pallid Swift Grafham Water, Cambridgeshire, 22nd May. Aberystwyth, Ceredigion, 4th November. Sandwich Bay, Kent, 1st November. Landguard, Suffolk, 31st October. Brinkworth, Wiltshire, 4th November. Little Swift *Apus affinis* Wadebridge, Cornwall, two, 20th–21st April. Lesser Grey Shrike Mull, Argyll, 4th May. Northern Long-tailed Tit Weeting Heath, Norfolk, 2nd April. Iberian Chiffchaff Hanningfield Resr, Essex, 6th–14th April. Horton, Staffordshire, 24th–26th April. Coombe Haven Valley, Bulverhythe, Sussex, 12th April. Eastern Subalpine Warbler North Ronaldsay, Orkney, 29th April to 5th May. Sardinian Warbler Hopton-on-Sea, Norfolk, 7th April. Blyth's Reed Warbler Setter, Fair Isle, 26th September. Swainson's Thrush Nanjizal, Cornwall, 21st September. Black-throated Thrush *Turdus atrogularis* Aylsham, Norfolk, 3rd February. Red-flanked Bluetail Houghton Forest, Arundel, Sussex, 4th March. Blue Rock Thrush *Monticola solitarius* Lydford CP, Devon, 2nd June. Pied Wheatear Idwal Slabs, Caernarfonshire, 11th June. Desert Wheatear Cramond, Lothian, 9th September. King's Lynn, Norfolk, 14th November. Yellow Wagtail *M. f. cinereocapilla/iberiae* Landguard, Suffolk, 10th–12th May. Citrine Wagtail Boyton Marshes RSPB, Suffolk, 28th August. Olive-backed Pipit Rattray, North-east Scotland, 26th October.

2010 Glossy Ibis Titchfield Haven, Hampshire, 26th September. Pallid Harrier Needwood, Staffordshire, 26th May. Great Snipe Loch Ardvule, South Uist, Outer Hebrides, 23rd May. Caspian Tern Henham Park, Blythburgh, Suffolk, 17th July. Hume's Warbler Clifford Hill, Northampton, Northamptonshire, 23rd–24th October. Cedar Waxwing *Bombycilla cedrorum* Waterfoot, Clyde, 4th December. Italian Sparrow *Passer domesticus italiae* Worthing, Sussex, 16th July to 10th August. Ashy-headed Wagtail *M. f. cinereocapilla* Walmsley Sanctuary, Cornwall, 23rd May. Grey-capped Greenfinch *Chloris sinica* Horley, Surrey, 4th–28th April.

2009 Spotted Sandpiper Birsay Bay, Mainland, Orkney, 5th–9th October. Eastern Subalpine Warbler Scousburgh, Mainland, Shetland, 19th May.

2008 Ross's Goose Hedgeley Ponds and Hauxley, Northumberland, 27th April to 2nd May. Lesser Scaup Alvecote Pools, Warwickshire, 14th–15th March. Wilson's Snipe Porth Hellick, St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, 24th October. Hornemann's Redpoll Barkland, Fair Isle, 8th April.

2007 American Herring Gull Stornoway, Lewis, Outer Hebrides, 17th March to 21st May.

2005 American Herring Gull Heaton Park Resr, Greater Manchester, 31st January. White-winged Black Tern *Chlidonias leucopterus* River Thames near Cliffe, Kent, 25th September.

2002 Eastern Cetti's Warbler *C. c. albiventris/orientalis* Filsham Reedbed, Sussex, 19th October.

1987 Eastern Phoebe *Sayornis phoebe* Slapton Ley, Devon, 22nd April.

1986 Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug* Fair Isle, 23rd October to 3rd December.

1983 Ashy-headed Wagtail Spurn, Yorkshire, 3rd May.

1981 Radde's Warbler *Phylloscopus schwarzi* Chapel Fields, St Agnes, Isles of Scilly, 6th–7th November.



BBRC

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Notes

More observations of an association between falcons and steam trains

Charles Trollope's observations of Hobbies *Falco subbuteo* hunting in the vicinity of a steam locomotive in Kent (*Brit. Birds* 105: 221) prompt me to record my father's recollections from his time as a footplate man working for British Railways in Lancashire in the 1960s. He regularly observed a Common Kestrel *F. tinnunculus* waiting on a telegraph pole at a specific point along the railway line between Preston and Burnley. The line

between Bamber Bridge and Hoghton Bank is on a steep incline, where steam locomotives hauling a heavy goods train would travel slowly (no more than 20 mph). The cylinder drain cocks from the locomotive (which effectively were responsible for periodically ejecting a jet of steam into the track-side vegetation) would flush prey from the scrub; the Kestrel would follow the locomotive at cab height searching for an easy meal.

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An exceptional inshore movement of Great and Arctic Skuas off southeast England in spring 2012

Small numbers of Great Skuas *Stercorarius skua* and Arctic Skuas *S. parasiticus* are seen regularly off southeast England in spring, as part of their northward pre-breeding migration. Although most birds pass beyond the range of land-based observers, counts of up to several tens per day can be made in inclement weather with strong onshore winds (from southeast to southwest). Peak counts are usually made between mid to late April (e.g. Newton *et al.* 2010), from prominent headlands such as Beachy Head (Sussex) and

Dungeness (Kent) (fig. 1). These sites have a long history of intensive spring seabird observations, typically stretching back several decades.

In spring 2012 an exceptional passage of both Great and Arctic Skuas occurred off southeast England in the second half of April (table 1). Although the data presented here are not effort-corrected and therefore cannot be converted into standard units, e.g. birds per hour, they do provide an indication of the numbers of birds passing close inshore along this flyway. Opportunistic sightings data were derived initially from local and county birding websites, in the format of daily totals at individual sites, and subsequently verified by local seawatching co-ordinators (who also provided information on previous record site/county totals; see Acknowledgments).

Prior to 16th April, numbers of both species had been unremarkable, with no day counts exceeding 20. The first large movement was on 18th April when a county record passage of Great Skuas was noted in Kent and Sussex, peaking at 288 off Dungeness (cf. the average spring total of 98 at this site during 1990–2007; Newton *et al.* 2010).

Table 1. Peak day counts of Great and Arctic Skuas off southeast England in April 2012. Kent counts are from Dungeness; Sussex counts are from Beachy Head and Splash Point, Seaford; Hampshire counts are from Hurst Beach; Dorset counts are from Portland Bill. Asterisks indicate record spring day totals for each county. Note that totals are not corrected for effort, which in most cases was not available.

	Kent	Sussex	Hampshire	Dorset
Great Skua				
18th April	288*	119*	14	41
25th April	147	155*	72*	39
26th April	67	105	6	63
Arctic Skua				
18th April	65	29	7	9
25th April	91*	153*	19	9
26th April	48	48	2	44

In addition, a total of 65 Arctic Skuas was observed at Dungeness (see table 1), which is the second-highest spring total at this site.

The next big movement was on 25th April, when totals of 147 Great Skuas passed Dungeness, 155 passed Splash Point, Seaford (Sussex), 72

passed Selsey Bill (Sussex) and 72 passed Hurst Beach (Hampshire); the Seaford and Hurst Beach counts represent new county record day totals for Sussex and Hampshire, respectively (table 1). The highest numbers of Arctic Skuas were seen off Beachy Head with 153 recorded, also a record spring day count for Sussex. A smaller but still significant passage of both species was seen at these sites the following day (26th April), and the peak spring counts for Dorset were made on this date (table 1). In addition, a passage of 50 Arctic Skuas off Selsey Bill on 30th April was a record spring day count for this well-watched site.

The geographical distribution of the records listed in table 1 is typical, with higher

numbers of birds passing sites farther east owing to the funnelling effect of the English Channel. Interestingly, the county record total of 72 Great Skuas in Hampshire on 25th April saw at least 40 passing through the narrow passage of The Solent before continuing east (fig. 1), with the remainder heading offshore and presumably passing south of the Isle of Wight (cf. the total of 72 at Selsey Bill and 107 at Worthing on the same date, which are both record day counts for these sites and indicate that most birds had moved back close inshore once they reached Sussex). The consistency in numbers recorded at adjacent sites provides evidence for a ‘wave’ of birds passing along the coast, and that the same birds are therefore likely to have been recorded at several sites on



Fig. 1. Map of southeast England showing locations of sites mentioned in the text. HB = Hurst Beach; SB = Selsey Bill, Wo = Worthing; SP = Splash Point, Seaford; BH = Beachy Head; Dunge = Dungeness. Note that Portland Bill is located approximately 65 km west of Hurst Beach.

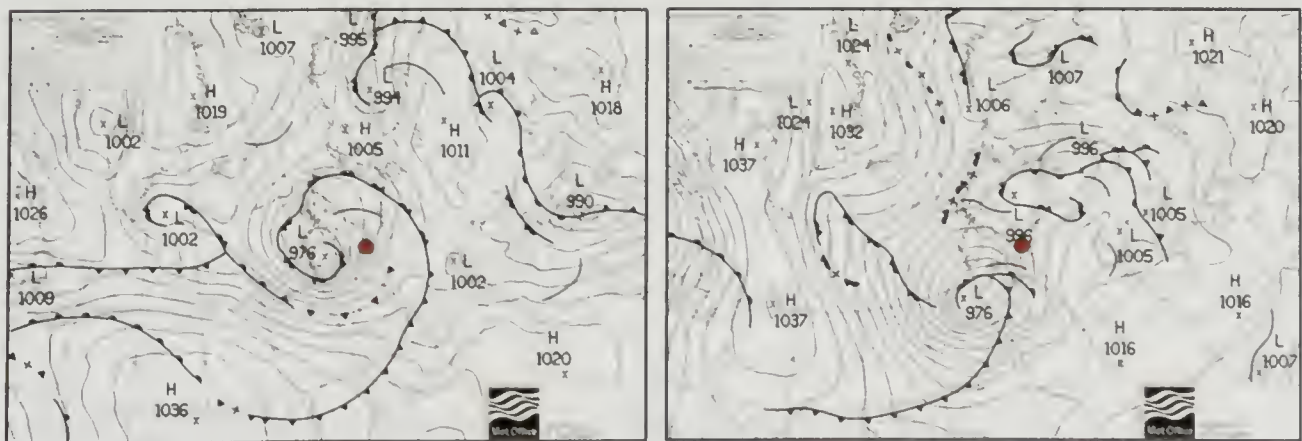


Fig. 2. Pressure charts for midnight on 18th April 2012 (left) and 25th April 2012 (right), showing the dominance of low pressure across southeast England (red dot) with strong southerly airflows and frontal systems producing wet conditions with reduced visibility (Source: UK Met Office).

the same day as they moved east.

The weather conditions for the peak movements on 18th and 25th April were typical for inshore skua passage, with strong onshore winds driven by eastward-tracking low-pressure systems (fig. 2). Interestingly, data obtained from www.trektellen.nl indicates that numbers of both skua species passing along the French and Belgian side of the Channel in spring 2012 were low, i.e. fewer than 20 birds per day.

The spring passage of Great Skuas in particular is important in an international context. The global breeding population of 16,000 pairs is restricted to the northeast Atlantic Ocean and surrounding seas, with over half in northern Scotland (Mitchell *et al.* 2004). This population has increased dramatically in recent decades, which may be a contributing factor to the record passage observed in spring 2012. Between 17th and 27th April a total of 657 birds were logged passing Dungeness, which equates to about 2% of the world population. The spatial and temporal concentration of such large numbers into a relatively narrow corridor close to the coast makes them potentially vulnerable to

developments such as offshore windfarms. Two proposals are currently being considered for arrays of >100 wind turbines off southern England, as part of The Crown Estate Round 3 Offshore Wind Programme (www.thecrownestate.co.uk); future Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) for migratory seabirds in this region should therefore take into account the condensed nature of passage in this internationally important flyway.

Acknowledgments

Thanks are due to Dave Walker (Dungeness Bird Observatory), John Cooper (Beachy Head), Dick Gilmore (Splash Point, Seaford), John Newnham (Worthing), Justin Atkinson (Selsey Bill), Paul James (Sussex County Recorder) and Marc Moody (Hurst Beach) for checking the accuracy of the figures presented here, providing historical context, and making comments on the draft manuscript.

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Azure-winged Magpie killing and eating a fledged juvenile House Sparrow

The note recently published by Sullivan & Techachoochert (2012) on an Azure-winged Magpie *Cyanopica cyanus* catching and eating an adult Barn Swallow *Hirundo rustica* prompts us to record a similar observation. On 27th May 2011 in a campsite in the Parque Natural de Monfragüe, Cáceres, Spain, we watched from inside a vehicle at a range of about 6 m as an adult Azure-winged Magpie flew down from a low tree onto a fledged juvenile House Sparrow *Passer domesticus* that was hopping on the ground of an open trackway across the campsite. The magpie held the sparrow down with its feet and

rapidly pecked it to death. It fed from the breast of the sparrow, then after about one minute it flew off carrying the corpse in its bill. Azure-winged Magpies were plentiful in this campsite, where diffuse groups totalling about 40 of them moved freely around tents, vehicles and caravans and fed tamely on bread and other scraps. Some of the adult magpies were seen to feed fledged juveniles.

Reference

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Singing and antagonistic behaviour by migrant Yellow-browed Warblers

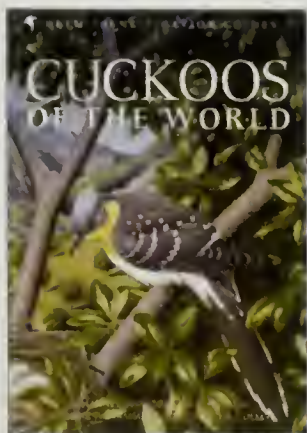
Following southeast winds on 13th October 2011, a good number of Yellow-browed Warblers *Phylloscopus inornatus* arrived along the north Norfolk coast and on 15th October I saw three different individuals in Holkham Meads. The weather was sunny, with little wind, viewing conditions were ideal and one bird was actively singing from the top of a Goat Willow *Salix caprea*. In *BWP*, the compilers quoted a record from the Netherlands of an autumn migrant singing, which implied, at least to me, that such an observation is unusual. However, in my experience of regular watching at Holkham (a prime coastal woodland site that records the species annually, and where sometimes double-figure numbers are present in October) since the mid 1980s, I have noted such behaviour almost annually, particularly if there is more than one bird present in the same area over successive days. As the song is quite unobtrusive (similar to a succession of calls, a rather quiet 'swit, tsweep, tsweep, tswooo' that trails off towards the end), many observers tend to overlook it. The best time to hear singing individuals is on windless and sunny mornings, when the weather conditions seem to draw the birds out into the tops of willows or birches *Betula* to sing.

The observation on 13th October 2011 differed in that the singing bird engaged in an antagonistic threat display, behaviour that is not mentioned at all in *BWP*. Initially the bird was content to flit from stem to stem within the canopy uttering its song, but once it had progressed to the topmost branches it began a rather involved bout of display. It leant forwards, almost parallel to the branch, with neck outstretched and began flapping its wings rapidly. It continued to sing and then moved into a more upright position with crown feathers raised, still constantly flickering its wings. It looked agitated and I then became aware that a second bird was present. The songster then flew into the centre of the bush, with a more laboured flight than normal, continuing shallow, rapid wing-flickering as it flew. It landed, still flicking its wings, and chased the second bird deep into the bush with a more direct flight. Shortly afterwards, both birds departed in opposite directions.

Such bouts of song during the autumn in the UK and the aggressive actions described presumably point to the bird holding an autumn territory within a distinct feeding circuit and demonstrate unwillingness to tolerate another of its kind in a favoured spot.

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Reviews



Cuckoos of the World

By Johannes Erritzøe, Clive F. Mann, Frederik P. Brammer and Richard A. Fuller

Helm, 2012

Hbk, 544pp; 36 colour plates, many colour photographs

ISBN 978-0-7136-6034-0 Subbuteo code M12049

£60.00 **BB Bookshop price £54.00**

Since this is the third major review of the Cuculidae in the last 15 years, following Bob Payne's work for *HBW* (1997, which recognised 136 species) and his standalone monograph, *The Cuckoos*, in the OUP 'Bird Families of the World' series (Payne 2005, 141 species), purchasers might justifiably expect something special here. Certainly an experienced team of authors was assembled, but do they deliver?

Although most cuckoos have been well covered in field guides, the plates here, by four artists, are very good (and vastly superior to those in Payne 2005). New World species suffer from being reproduced fractionally too small, while the Malagasy couas are scattered over four plates, one well separated from the others (with two species' plate legends reversed), and two South American *Coccyzus* are 'shunted' onto a plate of malkohas, 'orphaned' from their congenics. There is also an admirable selection of photographs (some of them stunning) adorning the species accounts, providing another plus over the Payne monograph (while species coverage exceeds that in *HBW*, gaps remain).

The 144 species accounts comprise sections on Taxonomy, Field Identification, Voice, Description, Biometrics, Molt, Distribution, Habitat, Behaviour, Breeding, Food, and Status and Conservation. Some are broken into clear subsections, enabling easy access to desired information, where available. Most accounts span 2–5 pages, including photographs and maps. Texts are telegraphic, an often necessary device in field guides, but a more discursive style would be my preference in works of this nature. Some of the abbreviations (explained on p. 26) seem pointless: PNG (Papua New Guinea) is doubtless self-explanatory, but NG (New Guinea) and IC (Ivory Coast), to name two, will be less obvious, and scarcely necessary as space-saving devices. Although the book is well referenced, with a very extensive bibliography, some very lengthy sections

close with an extensive list of relevant citations, making at least some facts difficult to research. The text evidently has been prepared over a long period and certain sections would have benefited from more rigorous editing to ensure their fluidity, and to remove inconsistencies and contradictions.

Undoubtedly a huge amount of work has gone into this book, but the personal touch is often missing, with large quantities of data (including virtually all of the biometrics) lifted wholesale from Payne (2005). Although there is little point in reinventing the wheel, extensive, specimen-based research will often yield useful insights. These authors appear to have relied heavily on personal visits to very few different institutions and, although they assembled a huge body of specimen data to create detailed range maps (available at www.fullerlab.org/cuckoos) on which the book's versions are based, reliance on online or other databases is not ideal. Subspecific taxonomy appears heavily based on the literature, although some references (e.g. for White-browed Coucal *Centropus superciliosus*) have been missed, with little evidence of novel research. Many of the voice sections would have benefited from use of internet forums such as the well-established xeno-canto database. Indeed, online resources, which have the potential to add a whole new dimension to the workload for authors, are rarely cited, as is correspondence with other researchers, despite many fellow ornithologists being thanked on pp. 9–10.

True errors appear rare, but 'slips' are not difficult to locate. A revision of the type locality of the nominate taxon of Rufous-vented Ground Cuckoo *Neomorphus geoffroyi* (Raposo *et al.* 2009; *Zootaxa* 2176: 65–68), which has obviously important implications for nomenclature, was missed. In a plea for reassessment of a Finnish record of Jacobin Cuckoo *Clamator jacobinus*, Lees & Mahood (*Dutch Birding* 33: 325–328) mention several published instances of vagrancy, e.g. in Iran, as well as increasing records in Thailand, which

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escaped Erritzoe *et al.* It is stated that there is just one confirmed Brazilian record of Mangrove Cuckoo *Coccyzus minor*, but two are mentioned, and additional photographs from other localities are available on www.wikiaves.com.br. A detailed discussion of parasitic behaviour by Common Cuckoos *Cuculus canorus* includes a lengthy list of hosts broken down by region but omits at least one species, Rufous-tailed Scrub Robin *Cercotrichas galactotes*, known in Turkey (Kirwan *et al.* 2008). A symbol employed on some maps goes unexplained on pp. 22–23, although its

meaning is reasonably apparent.

To answer the question I posed in the first paragraph, anyone whose avian interests extend well beyond the Western Palearctic, and who lacks Payne's monograph (which contains substantially more detailed introductory sections), should certainly consider the present work, especially if they do not own *HBW*. But, for those who do, I suspect that the decision concerning this attractive book might rest on the depth of their pockets.

Guy M. Kirwan



Wildlife in Printmaking

Edited by Carry Akroyd

Langford Press, 2011

Hbk, 168pp; full colour throughout

ISBN 978-1-904078-40-1 Subbuteo code M21140

£38.00 **BB Bookshop price £34.00**

At last here is a book dedicated to the artistry of modern wildlife printmaking. OK, there have been one or two artists who have had their works published in their own books, but this is the first to bring many artists and their prints together within the wrappers of one book.

Why the big fanfare then? Wildlife has long struggled to be recognised as a serious subject for art, apart maybe from the cave artists' work that showed their fellows the difference between something that was good to eat and the big toothy-thing that needed to be fled from. Since then virtually all wildlife artistic efforts have been patronisingly labelled as 'chocolate box' pictures. Except, that is, in the field of printmaking. Here, the case is almost opposite, with the natural history audience not always 'getting' the art form and the 'serious' art world more readily acknowledging it. And so with the publication of this work, both sides of this long-running debate now have a chance to fully enjoy this underexposed tract of art.

Within this beautifully presented, large-format book, Carry Akroyd (as editor and fine printmaker herself) has pooled together the works and words of 22 artists. For the most part, each section is a mini-catalogue dedicated to the work of one artist, with three other sections devoted to several artists' interpretations of winter, water, and flower and insects. The prints are a delight to the eye and are ably supported throughout by the texts of each artist, giving us an insight into their various approaches to image-making. Talking of texts, be

sure to read Mark Cocker's slightly quirky foreword.

Essentially, printmaking is the transfer of a medium from one surface to another, inked surface to paper or muddy boot to carpet – you know what I mean. The types of surface involved and the techniques applied to generate marks on the surface is where the real business end of the creative process is to be found. Traditional methods such as etching, wood engraving, linocut and screen printing are explored and explained in detail, with most artists specialising in one method only.

Many *BB* readers will be familiar with the beautiful linocuts of Robert Gillmor (*Preening Pair* 2007), the intricate wood engravings of Colin See-Payton (*Young Otters* 1994) and the big, bold and handsome hand-coloured linocuts of Andrew Haslen (*Spring Woodcock* 2010). If I have to pick out a couple of personal standout images, they would be Robert Greenhalf's *Four Snipe* (2005), Kim Atkinson's *Missel Thrush Calls Rattle Through Winter Woods* (2008), and John Paige's *Spotted Redshanks in June 2004*. However, the beauty of this sort of book is that it showcases works that have long deserved a wider sphere of publicity and with each read you will change your mind as to whose prints you admire the most.

My great expectations for this book have certainly been well met. It is joyful and an outstanding addition to the ever-growing library of wildlife art books published by the Langford Press.

Dan Powell

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Pelagic Birds of the North Atlantic: an identification guide

By Andy Paterson

New Holland, 2012

Pbk, 32pp; 272 black-and-white illustrations

ISBN 978-1-7800-9228-7 Subbuteo code M21314

£9.99 **BB Bookshop price £8.99**

Having recently been absorbed in the excellent *Petrels, Albatrosses and Storm-Petrels of North America* by Steve Howell (2012) (pp. 545–546), I was mindful of his advice on how to see tubenoses. The number of species you might expect on a pelagic day trip may be in the order of only 12–20 (with perhaps only 4–10 tubenoses) and the possibilities can therefore be reviewed easily beforehand. This seems like sound advice; field guides or handbooks inevitably suffer from sea spray and you probably won't have time to thumb through them anyway. But maybe a small waterproof guide covering relatively few species *would* be worth taking to sea, if only as an aide-mémoire. That is the thinking behind this small (approximately A5-sized) publication.

The guide covers the North Atlantic, from the Caribbean and Cape Verde Islands up to the Arctic, and includes 56 species. The selection of species sensibly includes all the tubenoses, tropicbirds, gannets and boobies, auks and skuas you could reasonably expect to see, plus a selection of the more pelagic gulls and terns. Each species has a selection of half-tone drawings, which vary from just two (Swinhoe's Storm-petrel *Oceanodroma monorhis*) to eleven for each of the smaller skuas. I would, however, question the need for nine illustrations of Magnificent Frigatebird *Fregata magnificens* when it is the only frigatebird covered. Identification as a frigatebird species would be straightforward for any pelagic birder but in the eastern Atlantic, where Magnificent is rare, a rare vagrant of a different species would be worth trying to rule out. For some of the illustrations the printing has resulted in some pale to mid-grey tones looking far too washed-out. Kittiwake *Rissa tridactyla* and Common Tern *Sterna hirundo* suffer badly in this respect with the adults of the latter looking more like Roseate Terns *S. dougallii*. Printing problems aside, the illustrations are not of the standard we now expect from a modern field guide. The shapes of many seabird species impart a distinctive jizz which is rarely conveyed in these

rather diagrammatic drawings.

The drawings are annotated with a series of bullet points giving key identification features. These captions are distinctly sparse. I compared them with those in the *North American Bird Guide* (Sibley 2000), which is known for its relatively economical use of annotations. For Wilson's Storm-petrel *Oceanites oceanicus*, to take a random example, Sibley gives eleven pointers whereas Paterson gives six. The latter makes no mention of tail shape, the extensive white undertail-coverts or the size of the rump patch, and does not describe the flight. In fact, few of the captions say anything about flight, potentially so useful in seabird identification. Only phalaropes and auks are shown on the water, when in calm conditions many of the species covered might be encountered sitting on the sea.

No range or status information is given, which the author points out is available elsewhere. This is true, but if you are going to have to gen up on likely species for your trip then you might as well do so for their identification as well, which brings us full circle. In any case, you really couldn't use this guide to identify many of the more subtle species covered, such as the Zino's/Fea's Petrels *Pterodroma madeira/feae*, skuas and the smaller shearwaters; the drawings and limited text simply do not give you enough information on what to look for. It might jog your memory for some of the more obvious birds, but for most pelagic birders I don't think that will be a good enough reason to take this guide to sea. The idea for the book is a good one but unfortunately the execution is rather disappointing.

John P. Martin

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Barn Owl Conservation Handbook: a comprehensive guide for ecologists, surveyors, land managers and ornithologists

By The Barn Owl Trust

Pelagic Publishing, 2012

Pbk, 395pp; many colour and black-and-white photographs

ISBN 978-1-907807-14-5 Subbuteo code M21073

£39.99 **BB Bookshop price £35.99**

The Barn Owl Trust has an excellent reputation for providing high-quality advice about this species, and their website is full of leaflets and information notes covering a wide range of subjects. This book brings together all that advice and guidance in one place, providing an invaluable resource for anyone involved in Barn Owl *Tyto alba* conservation. The book covers everything from legal and planning aspects, habitat management, nestbox design and installation, through to measures to reduce mortality from threats such as rodenticide poisoning and major roads. The text is balanced and well organised with a handy summary of key points at the start of each chapter, and excellent use is made of photographs and drawings throughout. The level of detail included is impressive and it is clear that the authors have gone to some lengths to try to make the guide as comprehensive as possible. There is even a series of plates to help determine how long a Barn Owl corpse may have lain undisturbed at an indoor roost site, culminating at an impressive 17 years after death, all recorded for posterity by the same photographer. This information could be useful to planners in helping to determine whether or not a site has been recently occupied by Barn Owls.

While the book will appeal mainly to professionals and volunteers closely involved with this species, there is also much information that is relevant to birders more generally. Armed with the information in the book, anyone who has contact

with farmers or landowners can help to spread the word about Barn Owl-friendly farming. And the book covers situations that almost any birder could encounter, such as stumbling across a nestling Barn Owl out of its nest-site. The usual advice, including for the Tawny Owl *Strix aluco*, is to leave well alone but it does not apply in this case! The book also tackles a number of issues that will be of wider interest than just to Barn Owl devotees. To give one example: many of us put food out for garden birds every day but is it acceptable to provide food for wild Barn Owls in order to try to boost survival rates?

A handbook of 395 pages might seem rather a lot to devote to just one species, albeit one of our most popular and iconic birds. Wildlife on farmland has fared badly in recent decades and a whole range of once familiar species are struggling and in need of assistance. However, as the authors point out, focusing conservation efforts on popular, high-profile species, particularly those towards the top of the food chain, can encourage measures that will ultimately benefit a wide range of other wildlife. If a farm has plenty of old trees for Barn Owls to nest in, rough grassland full of small mammals to feed on, and if poisons are used carefully to avoid accidental poisoning, then it will be a good place for a wide range of wildlife. This volume is the definitive guide for those involved in Barn Owl conservation but will hopefully help to achieve a great deal more besides.

Ian Carter

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News and comment

Compiled by Adrian Pitches

Opinions expressed in this feature are not necessarily those of *British Birds*

British lister breaks the 9,000-species barrier

Britons are rightly proud of the sporting achievements of our Olympian and Paralympian teams at London 2012 this summer. And in our own field of endeavour, Britain's birders are also world beaters. Gold medal – perhaps platinum medal is more appropriate – goes to ex-pat Brit Tom Gullick whose world bird list passed the 9,000-species mark in August. That's 90% of all the world's birds. Tom was guided on Tanimbar and Seram in the Maluku Islands of eastern Indonesia by Bird-tour Asia's Frank Lambert. Here's the tweet from @BirdtourAsia when the milestone was reached:

'Following a clean-up of the Tanimbar endemics, Tom Gullick becomes the first birder to see 9,000 species, with Wallace's Fruit Dove *Ptilinopus wallacii* as that milestone tick!' Tom completed his tour with Frank on a life list of 9,047. Fellow Brits Jon Hornbuckle (8,923), Hugh Buck (8,746) and Philip Rostron (8,644) make up the next three places in the world-lister rankings according to www.surbirds.com What you might call a clean sweep of the medal table for TeamGB Birders, not unlike the Jamaican sprinters...

Record-breaking Osprey

After surviving Scotland's soggy summer, a young Osprey *Pandion haliaetus* may have flown into the history books by making a record-breaking journey to sunnier climes. In just two weeks, 'Alba' left her natal home at RSPB Loch Garten in Highland and made her hazardous 3,000-mile maiden migration to West Africa.

Having hatched only this year, the female bird has astounded online audiences who have been following her journey on the internet. Alba and her sister Caledonia were fitted with satellite tags before leaving the nest so both RSPB staff and the public could follow their fortunes and movements. While the pair fledged successfully towards the end of August, Alba made short work of the journey to

their wintering grounds and is now believed to have made the fastest migration of any tagged European Osprey.

Richard Thaxton, site manager at RSPB Scotland Loch Garten Osprey Centre, said: 'It is astonishing that in just a fortnight, Alba has travelled from Loch Garten in Strathspey to southern Mauritania close to the border with Senegal. Other tagged birds have taken months to do this! It is all the more remarkable when you think that this is her first migration, with sea crossings to contend with and all sorts of weather. It's good to know she has arrived there safely.' To find out more visit www.rspb.org.uk/reserves/guide/ll/lochgarten/blog.aspx

Daylight calling by Tawny Owls – a request for information

With its acute hearing and sensitive night vision, the familiar Tawny Owl is well adapted to a nocturnal lifestyle, and indeed, throughout Europe it is considered to be a highly nocturnal species. So it is not always appreciated that they sometimes call during the day and, remarkably, they often do so in bright sunshine. Jeff Martin and Heimo Mikkola plan to explore this subject, initially to establish the months of the year when this can be heard most frequently, and the time of day. Can you help? For more details and to download a recording form, see www.britishbirds.co.uk/news-and-comment/daylight-calling-by-tawny-owls-a-request-for-information

BB grants for young birders/ringers

British Birds is awarding grants of up to £250 to young birdwatchers in the UK. Encouraging young people to pursue their interest in birds and birdwatching is crucial; they are the next generation of conservationists. BB grant aid will help up to six young people with the costs of a stay at a bird observatory on the British coast and/or expenses incurred learning to be a bird ringer. For an application form, e-mail adrianpitches@blueyonder.co.uk before 31st October stating the applicant's name, age, where they live and a brief outline of their need for grant aid.

Bunting on the edge

Jankowski's Bunting *Emberiza jankowskii* is less well known than Spoon-billed Sandpiper *Eurynorhynchus pygmeus*, which has featured in these pages quite a lot over the past 18 months, but its current plight appears to be equally serious. In brief, this striking bunting, once described as locally common across its range, including Far Eastern Russia, northeast China and North Korea, has suffered a calamitous population decline. The known population has crashed to fewer than 30 individuals; habitat destruction is almost certainly the main cause of the decline.

BirdLife International, in partnership with local groups, has recently begun a project to raise awareness of this bird's plight and establish a robust conservation action plan. Read a fuller version of this



Zhu Lei

369. Jankowski's Bunting *Emberiza jankowskii*.

story here: <http://birdingfrontiers.com/2012/08/24/jankowskis-bunting-a-very-rare-bird-indeed>

And find out how you can contribute to saving this species.

Shetland Common Eider decline

Shetland's Common Eiders *Somateria mollissima*, believed to be essentially resident within the archipelago, have attracted interest from conservationists because biometrics and more recently DNA analyses suggest that they should be classified as *S. m. faeroensis* rather than the nominate race occurring in mainland Scotland. While subspecific status has yet to be recognised by the BOU, the Shetland population is now treated separately in WeBS reports. Common Eiders are always vulnerable to inshore oil pollution, and their status has been monitored by the Shetland Oil Terminal Environmental Advisory Group (SOTEAG), through periodic Shetland-wide counts in August of flightless moult-flocks, which (at least until the late 1990s) formed at traditional, remote locations off headlands or offshore skerries where birds could feed, rest ashore, and move to shelter in varying wind and sea conditions.

From a first population estimate of 17,000 birds in the mid 1970s, oil pollution in 1978/79 and unexplained mortality in the largest wintering flock in 1979/80 started a decline, with numbers reduced to about 11,900 in 1984 and 6,200 by 1997 (5% is added to survey totals to allow for scattered

females and broods not counted). A marked change in moulting distribution then began, as birds moved into the sheltered voes (the equivalent of sea lochs), where they were increasingly found near aquaculture sites, firstly salmon farms and then mussel farms. This meant that surveys had to become far more extensive, covering 'traditional' and aquaculture sites, but the 2009 population estimate of 6,070 suggested little change since 1997, with 75% moulting close to aquaculture sites.

The August 2012 survey found 4,576 birds, which resulted in a population estimate of 4,800, 21% fewer than in 2009. The main deficit was in southwest Mainland, an area of intensive aquaculture where moulting numbers had increased from 417 in 1999 to 2,665 by 2009, but where 1,640 were counted this year. The reasons for this recent decline are unclear, although oil pollution since 2009 can be ruled out. Predation of ducklings by gulls and skuas can be severe, but this has been the case for years and while it may be having a long-term impact on the population, there has been no study to quantify this and contrast predation rates with populations elsewhere. In recent years there

have been a few instances of Killer Whale *Orca orca* pods attacking moulting flocks, with up to 50 Eiders being taken in just a few minutes, but again there is no quantifiable evidence on the extent of this. There has certainly been conflict between mussel farmers and Eiders, with concerns about excessive harassing of flocks by speedboats, and anecdotal but unverifiable reports of shooting and

the setting of anti-predator nets around mussel farms, but there is no indication that this continues, or that it has increased since 2009. The next survey is scheduled for 2015, and it can only be hoped that it does not record a further decrease.

(Contributed by Martin Heubeck and Mick Mellor)

Winter Thrushes Survey

Wednesday 12th September 2012 marked the start of the new BTO Winter Thrushes Survey. Over the next two winters, the BTO is asking people across the UK to record where and when they encounter any of our six species of thrush (Ring Ouzel *Turdus torquatus*, Blackbird *T. merula*, Fieldfare *T. pilaris*, Song Thrush *T. philomelos*, Redwing *T. iliacus* and Mistle Thrush *T. viscivorus*), found here either on migration or during the winter months.

Populations of all six species have shown signs of decline over the last 40 years. Blackbird, Song Thrush and Mistle Thrush have largely sedentary populations in the UK but the Blackbird population is heavily augmented each winter by huge arrivals of immigrants from Scandinavia and continental Europe, along with a sometimes massive winter influx of Redwings and Fieldfares from Scandinavia and Iceland. One key aim of the survey is to determine seasonal and geographical

patterns of how thrushes use the countryside. Another important aspect of the survey will be to record which food sources the birds are using at different times and places. It will also look at how changes in the countryside have affected thrush populations and how important food resources provided by gardens, orchards, hedgerows and woodlands are to the birds' winter survival.

To take part in the survey, and help to find answers to these questions, all you will have to do is map the thrushes you see on your favourite winter walk, or in your local neighbourhood, observe their habitat and behaviour and report details to the survey using a simple online recording system. The survey will run from 12th September 2012 to early April 2013 and again in winter 2013/14. Further details are available from www.bto.org

And the people's winner is...

Those of you who visited the BB stand at this year's Birdfair will no doubt remember the beans and jars that were part of the display. For those of you who were *not* there... each visitor to the stand was eligible to cast one vote by placing a bean in a jar alongside their favourite photo in this year's shortlist of 'Bird Photograph of the Year' winners. We gave no guidance and no criteria – we simply asked people to choose their favourite image. Over the course of the weekend almost 1,200 people voted, producing a clear winner and – not surprisingly, since judging photographic competitions is not an exact science, and there is no 'right' and 'wrong' – a different order from the BB judges.

The people's winner of the 2012 competition was Graham Catley's fourth-placed Sedge Warbler in flight. In second place was Harri Taavetti's (fifth-placed) flock of Steller's Eiders – and Harri came third also, with his magnificent Snowy Owl (11th equal in the original list). Graham wins a bottle of malt whisky, which is on its way to him in Lincolnshire, and it will hopefully aid the recovery of a bad back that prevented him getting to Rutland this year!

See the full shortlist at www.britishbirds.co.uk/about/bird-photograph-of-the-year

Tracking 'BB' to Africa

After the long slog south to Africa from southern Scotland, the *British Birds*-sponsored Cuckoo *Cuculus canorus* 'BB' remains in eastern Chad, close to the border with Sudan, as we went to press this month. Follow BB's progress at www.bto.org/cuckoos

For extended versions of many of the stories featured here, and much more, visit our website www.britishbirds.co.uk



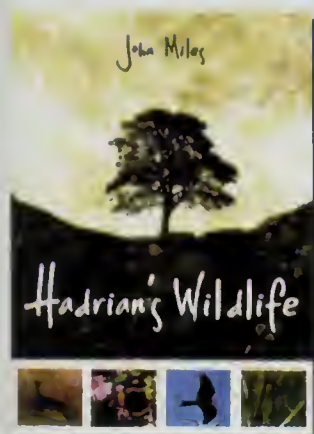
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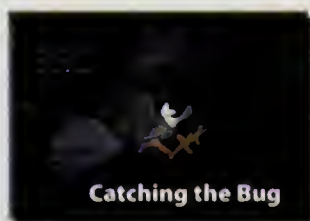
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SOC Conference

We will be attending the Scottish Ornithologists' Club Conference from 26th – 28th October at the Macdonald Aviemore Resort, Aviemore. If you'd like us to bring any specific titles for you then please let us know by phone or email.



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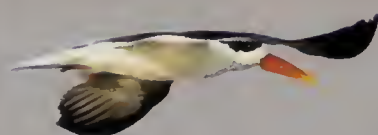
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